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THE COMPLETE WORKS OF JOHN RUSKIN

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Two thousand and sixty-two copies of this edition—of which two thousand are for sale in England and America—have been printed at the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh, and the type has been distributed.

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The Author of "Modern Painters." (1843)

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EDITED BY

E. T. COOK

AND

ALEXANDER WEDDERBURN

LONDON
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VOLUME III

MODERN PAINTERS

VOLUME I

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MODERN PAINTERS

VOLUME I

CONTAINING

PARTS I AND II

OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND OF TRUTH

BY

JOHN RUSKIN

"Accuse me not
Of arrogance, ...
If, having walked with Nature,
And offered, far as frailty would allow,
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,
Whom I have served, that their Divinity
Revolts, offended at the ways of men,
Philosophers, who, though the human soul
Be of a thousand faculties composed,
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
This soul, and the transcendent universe,
No more than as a mirror that reflects
To proud Self-love her own intelligence."

WORDSWORTH

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TO THE

LANDSCAPE ARTISTS OF ENGLAND

THIS WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THEIR SINCERE ADMIRER,

THE AUTHOR

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INTRODUCTION TO VOL. III

The following pages contain the first volume of *Modern Painters*, the book by which Ruskin, whose *juvenilia* have occupied the preceding volumes of this edition, first made his mark as a prose-writer. The successive volumes of *Modern Painters* were in some respects independent works. They form not one book, but four or five. The first volume was published in 1843; the fifth not till 1860. Between the first and second there was an interval of three years (1843–46), and in point of view and in style a marked distinction. Between the second volume and the third and fourth (which were issued together) there was an interval of ten years (1846–56); and there was another interval of four years (1856–60) before the fifth and final volume was published. During these intervals Ruskin did a great deal of other work. Thus, to mention his principal books only, during the second of the intervals he wrote and published *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice;* and in the last interval, *The Political Economy of Art*, foreshadowing his studies in social and political questions. There is in the five volumes of *Modern Painters* a unity of purpose, but it is an increasing purpose. "In the main aim and principle of the book," said its author in his preface to the last volume, "there is no variation, from its first syllable to its last. It declares the perfect and eternal beauty of the work of God; and tests all work of man by concurrence with, or subjection to, that." But in the illustration of this underlying purpose, there are "oscillations of temper" and "progressions of discovery."[1] As the author's studies were widened and deepened, his judgments on particular painters and schools of painting were subject to successive changes, so that, some knowledge of the influences which affected him is necessary to understand the book aright. Many changes, too, were made in its text, especially in that of the first volume, some of which, as its main text now stands, was written in 1843, some in 1846, some in 1851. Again, criticisms upon and allusions to the volume, which occur elsewhere, sometimes refer to passages removed from later editions, or to opinions subsequently discarded or modified by the author. Thus, some knowledge of the bibliography of *Modern Painters* is also essential to

[1] Author's preface to vol. v. of *Modern Painters*.

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the correct appreciation of it. To supply the information which is necessary for both these reasons is the main object of the introduction to this, as to the later volumes of the work.

Ruskin was only twenty-four when the first volume of *Modern Painters* appeared, but the germ of the book dates back to a much earlier time. *Modern Painters* was the work of an "Oxford Graduate"; the essay which contained its germ was written in the week before he matriculated. In October 1836, as already explained (Vol. I. p. xxxiii.), he had written a reply to a criticism in *Blackwood's Magazine* of Turner's pictures exhibited in that year. In those pictures—"Juliet and her Nurse," "Rome from Mount Aventine," and "Mercury and Argus"—Turner had developed the characteristics of his later manner "with his best skill and enthusiasm. . . . His freak in placing Juliet at Venice, instead of Verona, and the mysteries of lamp-light and rockets with which he had disguised Venice herself, gave occasion to an article in *Blackwood's Magazine* of sufficiently telling ribaldry, expressing, with some force, and extreme discourtesy, the feelings of the pupils of Sir George Beaumont at the appearance of these unaccredited views of Nature. The review," continues Ruskin, "raised me to the height of black anger in which I have remained pretty nearly ever since; and having by that time some confidence in my power of words, and—not merely judgment, but sincere *experience*—of the charm of Turner's work, I wrote an answer to *Blackwood*, of which I wish I could now find any fragment."[1] Ruskin's intention was to send the paper to *Blackwood*, but his father thought it right to ask Turner's consent to the publication. Turner's reply is given in *Præterita*.[2] Instead of returning the MS. for publication, he asked leave to send it to Mr. Munro of Novar, who had bought the picture of Juliet. Munro, says Ruskin, "never spoke to me of the first chapter of *Modern Painters* thus coming into his hands. Nor did I ever care to ask him about it." A contemporary copy of the essay has now been found among Ruskin's MSS.,[3] and is here printed for the first time[4] in Appendix i. (pp. 635–640). It is a most characteristic production, and should be read as a Prelude to *Modern Painters*. Alike in substance and in style, it is truly described as "the first chapter" of the book. It

[1] *Præterita*, i. ch. xii. § 243.

[2] Ruskin and his father did not at this time know Turner personally. Ruskin was introduced to him, by Griffith the picture-dealer, on June 20, 1840, as related in *Præterita* (ii. ch. iv. § 66), and from that date he was on very friendly terms.

[3] In MS. Book vii.: see "Notes on the MSS. of the Poems" in Vol. II. p. 532.

[4] One short extract from it was, however, given in Mr. Collingwood's *Life of John Ruskin*, 1900; see below, p. 635 *n*.

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shows how effectively Ruskin had even then occupied the ground on which his defence of Turner was to be based. *Blackwood* had criticised Turner's pictures as being "out of nature"; Ruskin maintained, on the other hand, that they were true to the vital facts of nature, while giving at the same time "the consecration and the poet's dream." And something of "the scarlet and the gold"[1] of the painter's fancy passed into the young critic's defence. The style was hereafter to be more fully informed, and more deeply suffused with passion; to be chastened also and matured; but Ruskin the golden-mouthed[2] is already there. It cannot, however, be considered other than fortunate that Turner discouraged his young champion from entering the fray. The years which intervened before the germ of *Modern Painters* bore fruit were full of various instruction, equipping Ruskin the better for his task.

The history of the years of preparation for the writing of *Modern Painters* has already been traced in the Introductions to Volumes I. and II. Ruskin's education was broken and discursive, but it gave him many advantages. It was an education in literature, in art, and in nature.

His reading, if discursive, had been deep. He was saved, alike by his own genius and by broken health, from the dangers of cram. He read to learn, rather than to pass examinations. In after years Ruskin was given to belittling his classical attainments.[3] But if he was never a scholar in any philological sense, he had the heart of the matter in him; he had assimilated much of the best classical literature.[4] Already in the first volume of *Modern Painters*, as in *The Poetry of Architecture* before it, the vitality and freshness of his classical allusions are remarkable. The description he gave of himself, "A Graduate of Oxford," was borne out by much of the contents of his first volume. His method of argument—starting everywhere from the particular fact—shows from the first the influence of Aristotle. His elaborate classifications, divisions, and marginal summaries are reminiscent of Locke, whose *Essay on the Human Understanding* is frequently cited in the earlier chapters of this volume. But

[1] See below, p. 624.

[2] St. Chrysostom (St. John the Golden-mouthed) was the name given to Ruskin by his friend, Mrs. Cowper Temple (the late Lady Mount Temple).

[3] See, *e.g.*, *Præterita*, i. ch. xi. § 220, and *Instructions in the Preliminary Exercises arranged for the Lower Drawing School*, Oxford, 1872, p. 9 *n*.

[4] "Curiously scanty and desultory as his scholarship had been as a student, we are continually struck in the Oxford lectures with the range of reading, the subtle comments, and the force of sympathy with which he had reached the inmost soul of so many classical writers, both prose and verse, Roman as well as Greek. Nor has any Professor of Greek, of Poetry, or of Philosophy, touched with a wand of such magic power so many inimitable passages of Homer, Hesiod, Æschylus, Pindar, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Lucian; or again of Virgil, Horace, and Catullus" (F. Harrison, *John Ruskin*, 1902, p. 136).

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Ruskin had not only read a good deal; he had himself already written much, as the two stout volumes of his *juvenilia* testify. "Though I shall always think," he wrote in after years, "those early years might have been better spent, they had their reward. As soon as I had anything really to say, I was able sufficiently to say it."[1]

Ruskin's studies in art have already been noticed in connexion with his *juvenilia* in prose and verse. We have there followed in detail the statement made in his preface to this volume (p. 5), that he had "been devoted from his youth to the laborious study of practical art." Especially should it be remembered, in reading the present volume, that Ruskin's descriptions of Turner were founded on long practice in copying that master's drawings and making studies—sometimes in water-colour or black-and-white, sometimes in oils—from his pictures. We have followed him also in the travels to which he referred when he added that his criticisms of the old schools of landscape painting were "founded on familiar acquaintance with every important work of art, from Antwerp to Naples." He might well have included England, for his acquaintance with the treasures of art in country-houses was also, as we have seen, unusually extensive. The foreign tour of 1833 had taken him to Brussels, Antwerp, Cologne, Milan, Genoa, Turin, and Paris. Though he was under the regulation age, he obtained permission to copy in the Louvre.[2] The tour of 1835 added Venice and Munich to his list; during the winter of 1840–41, he had seen Florence and spent weeks in the picture galleries and churches of Rome and Naples. His diaries in these years are not so full, as they afterwards became, of technical notes on pictures; but occasionally he makes a careful memorandum. Here, for instance, is an entry in his diary for 1841:[3]—

> TERNI, *April* 17.—Our last day in Rome I devoted to Sistine Chapel, and received real pleasure from it. I can appreciate Michael Angelo because his colour is so exquisitely subordinate to his light and shade. I do not remember seeing many notices of the delicate and refined feeling with which he has introduced the Madonna, meek, subdued, retiring behind the majesty of the Christ, but robed, the lower limbs at least, in the transparent blue of the heaven. This blue tells at first as a part of the firmament forming the background, and assists in keeping the figure subdued. This touch of delicate feeling is singularly contrasted with the unapproachable majesty—the infinite power—of the conception of the principal figure.

[1] "My First Editor," in *On the Old Road*, § 7.
[2] *Præterita*, i. ch. iv. § 94.
[3] *Cf.* in Vol. II. p. 167, the entry on the picture gallery at Bologna.

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At Rome, too, during this winter, he was thrown much into the society of Joseph Severn and George Richmond, and in their company saw the galleries, and spent long evenings in the talk of the studios.[1] His earlier prose pieces reflect on many a page his recollections and impressions of pictures in foreign lands.[2] It should be remembered that at this period Ruskin had learnt, among the foreign masters, to delight chiefly in northern art, and especially in Rubens.[3] He now ranked Rubens, Vandyck, and Rembrandt, his favourites among the old masters, on an equality with Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Velasquez. Of the Venetians he as yet knew comparatively little;[4] it was not till 1845 that he "discovered" Tintoret. The influence of Harding—Ruskin's drawing-master at the time when the first volume of *Modern Painters* was being written—told strongly against "the various Van somethings and Back somethings, more especially and malignantly those who have libelled the sea."[5] Harding "had religious views in sympathy with his pupil, and he soon inoculated Ruskin with his contempt for the minor Dutch school—those bituminous landscapes, so unlike the sparkling freshness that Harding's own water-colour illustrated, and those vulgar tavern scenes, painted, he declared, by sots who disgraced art alike in their works and in their lives."[6] One "discovery," made in the year before the first volume of *Modern Painters* was published, must specially be noted. In his earlier period he had sought, in sketching, for effects and views of specially romantic character; he had looked at nature, also, through the eyes of Prout or Turner, and had tried to compose in their way. But one day, in the spring of 1842, he noticed, on the road to Norwood, "a bit of ivy round a thorn stem, which seemed, even to my critical judgment, not ill 'composed.'" The lesson thus learnt—the lesson of thinking nothing common or unclean, and of seeking beauty through truth—was re-enforced later in the year in the forest of Fontainebleau, when he found himself "lying on the bank of a cart-road in the sand, with no prospect whatever but a small aspen tree against the blue sky. Languidly, but not idly, I began to draw it; and as I drew, the languor passed away: the beautiful lines insisted on being traced. . . . With wonder increasing every instant, I saw that they 'composed'

[1] See *Præterita*, ii. ch. ii.

[2] See, for instance, in Vol. I., allusions to Caravaggio, p. 147; Claude, Salvator, and Poussin, p. 112; Rubens, p. 146; Titian, p. 249; and in Vol. II., to pictures at Bologna, p. 167; Aix la Chapelle, p. 351; and Cologne, p. 352.

[3] See preface (§ 7) to *Modern Painters*, vol. v., where he asks to be forgiven for the excessive admiration of Rubens in the first volume.

[4] See *Præterita*, ii. ch. v. § 101, and author's preface to vol. v. of *Modern Painters*.

[5] Below, pt. i. sec. i. ch. i. § 4.

[6] W. G. Collingwood: *Life of John Ruskin*, 1900, p. 81.

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themselves by finer laws than any known of men. . . . 'He hath made everything beautiful in his time,' became for me thenceforward the interpretation of the bond between the human mind and all visible things; and I returned along the wood-road feeling that it had led me far."[1] It was to lead him to *Modern Painters*. The impression made upon him at the time by his new interest in simple studies from nature is well shown, and clearly expressed, in the Letter to a College Friend, of August 19, 1842.[2]

It was, however, to his long apprenticeship to Nature that Ruskin attached the greatest importance among the formative influences on his thought. "The beginning of all my own right art work in life depended," he says, "not on my love of art, but of mountains and sea. . . . I would pass entire days in rambling on the Cumberland hill-sides, or staring at the lines of surf on a low sand; . . . and through the whole of following life, whatever power of judgment I have obtained in art, which I am now confident and happy in using, or communicating, has depended on my steady habit of always looking for the subject principally, and for the art only as the means of expressing it."[3] It was this long study of nature that gave to Ruskin, in writing *Modern Painters*, his confidence and tone of authority. "I should not have spoken so audaciously," he wrote at the time, "had I not been able to trace, in my education, some grounds for supposing that I might in deed and in truth judge more justly of him [Turner] than others can. I mean, my having been taken to mountain scenery when a mere child, and allowed, at a time when boys are usually learning their grammar, to ramble on the shores of Como and Lucerne; and my having since, regardless of all that usually occupies the energies of the traveller,—art, antiquities, or people,—devoted myself to pure, wild, solitary, natural scenery; with a most unfortunate effect, of course, as far as general or human knowledge is concerned, but with most beneficial effect on that peculiar sensibility to the beautiful in all things that God has made, which it is my present aim to render more universal."[4] The same justification for his confidence is expressed in the passage from the fourth Book of Wordsworth's *Excursion*, which Ruskin placed on the title-page of every volume, in every edition, of *Modern Painters*. "He has just gone," writes his father on one occasion, "from a hurried dinner, to the sunset, which he

[1] *Præterita*, ii. ch. iv. §§ 74, 77; and see below, pt. ii. sec. iv. ch. iv. § 10 *n*. See also Plate No. 25 in Vol. II., and p. xlii. of the Introduction there; and see the drawings of the aspen in *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. Plates 27 and 28.

[2] Vol. I. p. 470.

[3] *Eagle's Nest*, § 41.

[4] See Letter to Liddell, in Appendix iii., below, p. 669.

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visits as regularly as a soldier does his evening parade."[1] He was young in years when he sat down to write the book; but already, as the preceding volumes have shown, he had long "walked with Nature," and offered his heart "a daily sacrifice to Truth."

It was natural, therefore, that Ruskin's immediate preparation for *Modern Painters* should be a sojourn at Chamouni. The book in some form seems to have been in his mind during his long sojourn on the Continent in the winter of 1840–41; for on February 12, 1841, he wrote to his College Friend, "I have begun a work of some labour which would take me several years to complete."[2] At that time, however, his health forbade hard work, and, moreover, his final examinations at Oxford were still in front of him. These were disposed of in May 1842; and he at once set out with his parents for Switzerland. He had been greatly impressed in the spring of this year by the sight of Turner's new foreign sketches—the "Splügen" drawing, which was presented to Ruskin by his friends in 1878, being among the number. Of these sketches, and of the drawings made from them, an account is given in the Epilogue to Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, and repeated references to them will be found in the following pages.[3] Many of the original sketches may be seen in the National Gallery.[4] The lesson of these drawings was the same as Ruskin learnt from his "discovery" described above. He saw in them examples, in Turner's highest power, of the landscape-art which owes nothing to traditional rules of composition, but attains, after long study of nature, to impressions of her inmost truth and spirit. His admiration of the "Splügen" drawing "directed mainly," Ruskin says, "all my mountain-studies and geological researches."[5] Ruskin and his parents went by Rouen, Chartres, Fontainebleau, Auxerre, Dijon, and Geneva. At Fontainebleau came the artistic revelation of the aspen already mentioned; at Geneva—in church one Sunday—a fit of self-reproach, and a resolution to get "some real available, continuing good, rather than the mere amusement of the time." This "was the origin of Turner's work"[6] The immediate impulse was the same as in the case of the essay of 1836. A review of the Royal

[1] Letter to W. H. Harrison from Dijon, May 28, 1844.
[2] Vol. I. p. 434.
[3] See below, pp. xxiii., 250, 551.
[4] Nos. 290, 286, 287, 288, and 289 are the first sketches of afterwards completed drawings. There are also hundreds of other Swiss sketches made at the same time.
[5] Epilogue to vol. ii. of *Modern Painters*.
[6] *Præterita*, ch. iii. § 58, ch. iv. § 78; and see the letter to Osborne Gordon, in Appendix iii., below, p. 666.

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Academy's Exhibition of 1842 had reached Ruskin at Geneva, and filled him with rage.[1]

Ruskin had seen the pictures before leaving England, and, as the subsequent notices in this volume show, greatly admired them. The review which reached him at Geneva was probably that in the *Literary Gazette* or the *Athenæum*, both of which papers W. H. Harrison was in the habit of sending to Ruskin or his father. Some extracts are worth giving as showing the kind of criticism against which the first volume of *Modern Painters* was directed.[2] The *Literary Gazette* (No. 1321, May 14, 1842, p. 331) wrote:—

"No. 52, 'The Dogano' (*sic*), and 73, 'Campo Santo,' have a gorgeous *ensemble*, and produced by wonderful art, but they mean nothing. They are produced as if by throwing handfuls of white, and blue, and red, at the canvas, letting what chanced to stick, stick; and then shadowing in some forms to make the appearance of a picture. And yet there is a fine harmony in the highest range of colour to please the sense of vision; we admire, and we lament to see such genius so employed. But 'Farther on you may fare worse.' No. 182 is a Snow-storm of most unintelligible character—the snow-storm of a confused dream, with a steamboat 'making signals,' and (apparently, like the painter who was in it) 'going by the head' [*sic*; the word was of course lead]. Neither by land or water was such a scene ever witnessed; and of 338, 'Burial at Sea,' though there is a striking effect, still the whole is so idealised and removed from truth, that instead of the feeling it ought to effect, it only excites ridicule. And No. 353 caps all before for absurdity, without even any of the redeeming qualities in the rest. It represents Buonaparte,—facetiously described as 'the exile and the rock-limpet,' standing on the seashore at St. Helena. . . . The whole thing is so truly ludicrous, that the *risum teneatis* even of the Amici is absolutely impossible."

The *Athenæum* (May 14, 1842, No. 759, p. 433) was more ribald. Only by contemplation of Creswick's delicious landscape, it seems, could the spectator be prepared for the painful effect of Turner:—

"This gentleman has on former occasions chosen to paint with cream, or chocolate, yolk of egg, or currant jelly,—here he uses his whole array of kitchen stuff.[3] . . . We cannot fancy the state of eye, which will permit any

[1] The pictures by Turner in the Exhibition of 1842 were (1) Venice (view across the Grand Canal and Giudecca), National Gallery, No. 372 (now at Leicester); (2) Venice, the Campo Santo (in Mr. Bicknell's collection, referred to below, p. 250); (3) Snow-storm (N.G. No. 530; see below, p. 570); (4) "Peace" (Burial of Wilkie), N.G. No. 528; (5) "War: the Exile and the Rock-Limpet" (Napoleon), N.G. No. 529; see below, 273.

[2] Examples of the skits from the comic papers are given in Thornbury's *Life of Turner*, 1877, p. 398. Thackeray was among the scoffers (*ibid.* p. 399).

[3] For Ruskin's reply to this "eggs and spinach" criticism, see below, p. 277 *n.*

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one cognizant of Art to treat these rhapsodies as Lord Byron treated 'Christabel'; neither can we believe in any future revolution, which shall bring the world round to the opinion of the worshipper, if worshipper such frenzies still possess."

The "Burial of Wilkie" and "Napoleon" were guyed in turn, and the critique concluded with surprise that the perpetrator of such outbreaks should have been allowed a place on the walls.

With these criticisms ringing in his ears as a call to action, Ruskin went on to Chamouni, hoping to say what was burning in his heart and mind within the limits of a pamphlet. But at Chamouni he became engrossed "with snow and granite."[1] And the more he considered, the larger grew the enterprise. The scheme for a pamphlet became one for a treatise. The defence of Turner was, therefore, postponed for autumn work at home. Some account of the expansion of Ruskin's scheme will be found in the description of the MSS. here given in Appendix v.

Of the tour of 1842, and of the studies at Chamouni immediately preparatory to the first volume of *Modern Painters*, no diary is now extant; perhaps little or none was written. His "feelings and discoveries" of this year were, he says, "too many and too bewildering to be written."[2] A few extracts from the diary of 1844, when he returned to like pursuits at Chamouni, will show how the days were passed in the earlier year also:—

> GENEVA, *May* 1.—We arrived here yesterday. . . . The day before I should remember, for the walk I had at St. Laurent; above all, for the phenomenon at sunset which I had never seen till then—of the sun's image reflected from a bank of clouds above the horizon, for at least a quarter of an hour after he had set. It had all the brilliancy of a reflection in water, and if I had not seen the sun set, I should have taken it for the sun itself. A point of greatest intensity was on the edge of the cloud, but it shot up a stream of splendid light far towards the zenith, as well as downwards towards the sun. . . . About me lay the grey concave blocks of the Jura limestone—slippery with wet. Large black and white snails had come out everywhere to enjoy the rain. In the crevices of the rocks the lily of the valley grew profusely—accompanied by the wild strawberry and cowslip. I found a root of the star gentian, and kissed it as the harbinger of the Alps. The sunlight on the mossy ground burned russet as I returned, and died away in rose upon the piny hills.

[1] See the letters to W. H. Harrison and Rev. W. L. Brown, given in a note to Ruskin's poem, "A Walk in Chamouni," at Vol. II. pp. 222–223.
[2] *Præterita*, ii. ch. iv. § 78.

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CHAMOUNI, *June* 20.—8, morning. An hour ago, I had the most beautiful sight that ever morning gave me among the Alps. The clouds had broken into fragments about the aiguilles which appeared brownish in the sky and transparent on the rocks, showing the whole form through; the tops of the crags were all clear, freshly and deeply laden with snow, and dark against the pale morning blue; but each had blowing from its peaks northward, a fringe of sunny cloud of intense brightness; that on the Charmoz was unbroken, and appeared like a glory. Below, under the Tapia, all was grey, dark cloud—cutting off their connection with the earth; on the Dru, the cloud was blowing from the north, the north side being clear; and the vapour rolling away in dark folds like a volume of smoke on the south, but the upper edge of every fold touched like a star with sunshine, and one bit, hanging in a cleft on its side, wedge shaped, shone like a bonfire. Mont Blanc, just seen and no more, through the transparent mist, ghost-like; but the white Aiguille du Goûter pure and serene in intense light, every spot of its sides down to the Pavillon covered with pure new snow so as to make it as beautiful as the highest Alp. But all passed away as soon as seen. . . .

CHAMOUNI, *June* 23.—9 o'clock, morning. There is a strange effect on Mont Blanc. The Pavillon hills are green and clear, with the pearly clearness that foretells rain; the sky above is fretted with spray of white compact textured cloud which looks like flakes of dead arborescent silver. Over the snow, this is concentrated into a cumulus of the Turner character, not heaped, but laid sloping on the mountain, silver white at its edge, pale grey in interior; the whole of the snow is cast into shadow by it, and comes dark against it, especially the lower curve of the Aiguille du Goûter. But on the summit the cloud is melted into mist, and what I suppose to be a heavy snow-storm is falling on the Grand Plateau, and in the hollow behind the Grands Mulets; into this shower the mountain retires gradually, and the summit is entirely veiled.

CHAMOUNI, *June* 26.—¼ past 4, morning. Of all the lovely dawns I ever saw on Mont Blanc, this bears the bell. When I woke at ½ past three, its form was scarcely distinguishable through morning mist, which in the lower valley hung in dense white flakes among the trees along the course of the Arve. There were heavy white clouds over the Pavillon, relieved against a threatening black ground which reached the horizon. The outline of the snow was throughout indistinct with what I thought were wind avalanches, but I believe they must have been evaporating moisture, blowing towards Cormayeur. As the dawn grew brighter, a brown group of cloud formed near the Dome du Goûter—not on it, but in the sky, blowing also towards Cormayeur. Presently the black threatening part of the horizon grew luminous, and threw out the clouds, before white, as grey masses from its body,

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gradually disappearing itself into the ordinary light of pure horizon. A few minutes afterwards the first rose touched the summit, the mist gradually melting from the higher hills, leaving that in the valley arranged at the top in exquisitely fine, horizontal, water-like cirri, separated by little intervals from its chief mass. The light lowered to the Tacul and Dome, and such intense fire I never saw. The colour is deeper in the evening, but far less brilliant; a quarter of an hour afterwards, when it had touched the Aiguille du Goûter, it began to diminish on the summit, which then looked feeble and *green* beside the Tacul and Aiguille du Goûter; then the Aiguille du Midi caught it, but in proportion as it touched the lower height, it was less rosy. It is now intensely white, a little tawny, reaching to base of the Aiguille du Goûter, on which, as well as on the Breven and top of Mont de la Côte, there is deep fresh snow. The clouds became first brown, then rosy, then melted away—all but one cirrus which yet hangs just over the Dome. The valley mist is nearly melted, a fleecy flake hangs here and there among the pines; the air is intensely clear, and the meadows white-green with dew. Now another bank of mist has formed down the valley. It is instructive to observe that though apparently snow-white on the pastures, it comes vigorously dark against the pure sky of the south-west. The green light on the flank of the Breven is beautiful beyond measure.

On such "constant watchfulness," as Ruskin says, were the statements in *Modern Painters* founded.[1] Thus for long and happy days did Ruskin study the "Aiguilles and their Friends";[2]

> "And by the vision splendid
> Was on his way attended."[3]

On days of blue unclouded weather, he climbed the hills and explored the glaciers with his Savoy guide;[4] or pondered among the gentians and the Alpine roses; or sketched in the Happy Valley.[5] On days of rain, he would work indoors—sorting or sketching his minerals and flowers, or making careful studies of tree-structure from branches of pine. It was "beneath the cloudless peace of the snows of Chamouni" that Ruskin was to write, half-a-century later, the epilogue of the book "which their beauty inspired and their strength guided."

From Chamouni Ruskin returned home by the Rhine and Flanders, and, in his study at Herne Hill, set himself to writing his first volume. "Returning," says Ruskin, "in the full enthusiasm and rush of sap in the too literally sapling and stripling mind of me, (I) wrote the first

[1] *Præterita*, ii. ch. iii. § 49, and ch. v. § 94.
[2] The title of Plate 69 in vol. v. of *Modern Painters*.
[3] Wordsworth: *Intimations of Immortality*.
[4] In 1842 Michel Devouassoud (*Præterita*, ii. ch. iv. § 78).
[5] The frontispiece to Volume II. is from a drawing of Chamouni made in 1842.

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volume of *Modern Painters*."[1] His mind was well stored. His heart was burning within him. His pen had already learnt much of its cunning. His home surroundings were favourable, too, to his work. Herne Hill was in those days at the edge of the open country. *Modern Painters* could never have been written, Ruskin used to say in later years, except in the purer air of fifty years since.[2] In October 1842 the Ruskin household was moved from Herne Hill to the larger house and grounds of Denmark Hill. Here Ruskin's study, on the first floor, looked on to "the lawn and further field"; while the window of his bedroom above, looking straight south-east, "gave command of the morning clouds, inestimable for its aid in all healthy thought."[3] Near by was Croxted Lane,[4] then a green by-road passing through hedge-rows. "There," says Ruskin, "my mother and I used to gather the first buds of the hawthorn; and there, in after years, I used to walk in the summer shadows, as in a place wilder and sweeter than our garden, to think over any passage I wanted to make better than usual in *Modern Painters*."[5] And, for his special art work, Ruskin was otherwise well placed. He had Dulwich Gallery close by, for examples of the ancients; and for Turner, he had not only the run of the master's own gallery in Queen Anne Street; but, nearer home, the collection of Mr. Bicknell at Herne Hill freely open to him, and the yet richer one of Mr. Windus within an easy journey at Tottenham. At Norwood, too, within an easy walk of Denmark Hill, was Mr. Griffith, the picture-dealer, who had first introduced Ruskin to Turner, and in whose house pictures and drawings by the artist were always to be seen.[6] Of the spirit in which Ruskin set himself to his task, the *Letters to a College Friend* and to Dale have already had something to tell. He had felt intensely a call to the interpretation of art and nature, "not by a flying fancy, but so long as I can remember, with settled and steady desire."[7] But it was a "serious call," and he threw into his answer to it all the earnestness and solemnity of a highly-strung temperament. Two long letters—written to Liddell and Osborne Gordon respectively—have been preserved, explaining in his own words the temper and the object in which he set

[1] Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. (1883 ed.), § 3.

[2] *The Art of England*, § 184. *The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884, p. 137; and see the account of Herne Hill and its surroundings in *Præterita*, i. ch. ii.

[3] *Præterita*, ii. ch. viii. § 150, where Ruskin further describes his study. For the date of the move to Denmark Hill, see *Letters to a College Friend*, Vol. I. p. 474. At Herne Hill Ruskin's study was on the second floor, looking out upon the front garden.

[4] It was in Croxted Lane that Mr. Allen drew for Ruskin "Spirals of Thorn" (plate 52 in *Modern Painters*, vol. v.).

[5] *Fiction Fair and Foul*, § 1.

[6] For Mr. Bicknell, see below, p. 244 *n.*; for Mr. Windus, p. 234 *n.*; for Mr. Griffith, Epilogue to Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*.

[7] Letter to Dale, Vol. I. p. 398.

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himself to write his book. These letters are printed in Appendix iii. (pp. 665–671). It seems that by this time Ruskin had abandoned the idea of taking Orders, which he had for some time entertained;[1] but Bible study still formed a part of his daily discipline. Among the MSS. of *Modern Painters* now in America (p. 682) is a translation, with notes, of the Epistle to the Romans. The MS. goes as far as ch. v. verse 7. It is an endeavour to translate the Greek text with close accuracy. The MS. does not seem worth printing, as an example of Ruskin's biblical studies at this period is included in the *Letters to a College Friend*.[2] It was Ruskin's habit, late on in life also, to do a little bit of very careful translation—from the Bible or Plato—every day. His style was in some measure the result of infinite pains.

With 1843 the diaries are again available. A few entries selected from the early months of the year will afford a glimpse of the author at work, showing his diverse interests and enthusiasms, and recording the progress of his composition:—

> *Jan.* 15.—Noble sermon from M[elvill],[3] relating chiefly to the constant necessary progress of man, even in eternity, and the necessary property of the Deity to be able to reveal Himself constantly, more and more, to all eternity without ever exhausting His attributes.
>
> I had a bright, sunny walk afterwards—on the hills: cloudless, though hard frost, and sparkling dusty snow half an inch deep brightening everything. I was delighted at the top of the hill, to catch the edge of the road, in shade—all snow—against the sky, and then the first touches of sun on the ruts as I rose. It was the light of the Alps, and their look against the sky—for a moment of fancy.
>
> *Jan.* 16.—. . . Turner is going to do ten more drawings, and I am in a fever till I see the subjects. . . .[4]
>
> *Jan.* 19.—Yesterday with Richard[5] to Geological. . . . To-day pleasant lesson from Harding, and got splendid Modern Italy[6] at Jennings', and some valuable notes at Royal Academy; but late to-night, and must be up to organize in the morning. Tennant said that a man published a paper a little while ago concerning geology, in which he described mountain limestone as granite; this is certainly rather broader than I could have fancied.

[1] See *Letters to a College Friend*, Vol. I. pp. 415, 433, 460.
[2] In the letter (xvi.) of Jan. 8, 1843, and the essay on "Was there Death before Adam fell?" Vol. I. pp. 475–487.
[3] See Vol. I. p. 490.
[4] See above, p. xxiii.
[5] Richard Fall; see Vol. II. p. 429.
[6] *i.e.* a print from Turner's picture, for which see below, p. 300 *n*. The notes at the Academy must have been from the Diploma Gallery (see below, p. 190).

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Jan. 24.—I am getting quite dissipated—out at Drury Lane last night. Macready in *Macbeth*, wretched beyond all I had conceived possible; quite tired and bored, but Gordon liked it. . . .

Jan. 25.— . . . Walked down to Zoological Gardens, and had a pleasant saunter with Gordon. Many new animals; I think I shall manage to go there oftener. Curious essay of Newman's I read some pages of—about the ecclesiastical miracles: full of intellect, but doubtful in tendency. I fear insidious, yet I like it.[1]

Jan. 26.—Pleasant evening with Gordon and his sister and Richard, but little done. Sauntered with him into Dulwich Gallery, and wrote a little, and drew badly. The days get long apace, however, and my work is beginning to assume form.

Jan. 27.—Gordon left us to-day, and I miss him very much—kind fellow, and clever as kind. Took him into town, and called on Turner; found him in, and in excellent humour, and will come to me on my birthday. Then on to Jones,[2] with whom I chatted for a long time, he condescendingly going on with his work. I had a delicious day altogether, counting a pleasant lesson from Harding, who says I yield a great deal too much to my feelings in drawing, and don't judge enough. I feel this to be true, and will try to conquer it; it is new to me. . . .

Jan. 31.—I have worked hard to-day, but I have done nothing. My stuff is getting a little into shape at last. . . . Scarcely read a word now or do anything but the matter in hand. . . .

Feb. 8.—The happiest birthday evening save one I ever spent in my life. Turner happy and kind; all else fitting and delightful. . . .

Feb. 9.—I wish my work went as the days do; I am terribly behind. All day long in town to-day, and bothered in the Nat. Gall.—quite certain of the villainousness of the pictures, but difficult to prove.

Feb. 10.—. . . Nothing done beyond a single chapter to-day.

Feb. 11.—Worked hard to-day and got on. . . .

Feb. 12.—So go the seven years, fat and lean; they are of more even tenour now, and will be, I hope, for ever. . . .

Feb. 15.—Bless me, how the days go! Only 14 days to the time I gave myself for finishing my work. However, I mustn't write here, but go to sleep, and be up early and at work. . . .

Feb. 18.—. . . Worked a good deal, but got on very slowly.

Feb. 21.—It is strange—I work and work and cannot get on; had to rewrite a whole chapter to-day. But I had a lovely walk—mild sun and baking wind—and I got to the snowdrifts where they

[1] Cardinal Newman's "Essay on the Miracles recorded in Ecclesiastical History" first appeared in 1842 as an introduction to his translation (vol. i.) of Fleury's *Ecclesiastical History*.

[2] Presumably George Jones, R.A. (1786–1869), Keeper of the Royal Academy, and a great friend of Turner.

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still lay deep and pure, and glowed in the sun as if they had been on the Alps; and the dogs went half out of their wits with delight, rolling and kicking in it, and throwing it over each other. What a lovely thing a bit of a fine, sharp, crystallized, broken snow is, held up against the blue sky, catching the sun! Talk of diamonds!

Feb. 24.— . . . Called at Turner's . . . insisted on my taking a glass of wine, but I wouldn't; excessively good-natured to-day. Heaven grant he may not be mortally offended with the work!

May 1.[1]—Couldn't write while I had this work for Turner to do; had not the slightest notion what labour it was. I was at it all April from 6 morning till 10 night, and late to-night too—but shall keep on, I hope.[2]

The first volume of *Modern Painters* was published in the first week of May 1843.[3] Ruskin was then just twenty-four years of age. The author's youth was the reason of his concealing his personality under the description "A Graduate of Oxford"—"sure," he says, "of the truth of what I wrote, but fearing that I might not obtain fair hearing, if the reader knew my youth."[4] This was a counsel of prudence—as also the adoption of a *nom de plume* for *The Poetry of Architecture*—which Ruskin owed to his father.[5] The concealment was at first well sustained; even college tutors and friends were unaware of the author's identity.[6] The title which Ruskin originally chose for the volume was *Turner and the Ancients*. To this, however, the publishers objected; and to them the title *Modern Painters* was due. Ruskin, however, was not entirely deprived of his Turner and the Ancients, and the title-page of the book was well filled as follows:—

Modern Painters: | Their Superiority | In the Art of Landscape Painting | To all | The Ancient Masters | proved by examples of | The True, the Beautiful, and the Intellectual, | From the | Works of Modern Artists, | especially | From those of J. M. W. Turner, Esq., R.A. | By a Graduate of Oxford | [Quotation from Wordsworth] | London: | Smith, Elder & Co., 65 Cornhill. | 1843.[7]

[1] The diary skips from February 27 to May 1, except for a brief note on March 12.

[2] *i.e.* at work for the second volume.

[3] The date, April 5, given in Wise and Smart's Bibliography, is incorrect. On April 22 the book was advertised as "nearly ready"; on May 6, as "just published."

[4] *Academy Notes*, 1856, preface.

[5] Cf. *Præterita*, i. ch. xii. § 250.

[6] See Liddell's letter, below, p. 668 *n*. Ruskin notes also in his diary (on May 15, 1843), that "Richmond seems to have no idea at present it can be mine."

[7] The underlined words appeared on the back, with the design reproduced below (p. lvii.). For further particulars, see Bibliographical Note. For the story of the title, see Ruskin's letter to Liddell, below, p. 668; and *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xii. § 1 *n*.

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Ruskin accepted the compromise, but did not like it. The cumbersome description was afterwards dropped, and he must have been satisfied with the short title, for in after years he preferred to call himself "the author of *Modern Painters*."

The book was published by Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. Ruskin's father, who until his death in 1864 acted as his son's literary agent, had in the first instance offered the book to John Murray, without, however, showing him the MS. "He said," wrote J. J. Ruskin to W. H. Harrison (March 31, 1847), "the public cared little about Turner, but strongly urged my son's writing on the German School, which the public were calling for works on." Murray asked, however, for sight of a sheet. "I thought," continues J. J. Ruskin, "if I sent a sheet, and the work was refused, I should be offering my old friend P. Stewart a rejected book. I therefore declined submitting any sheet, and carried the work at once to Smith & Co." Harrison had written to ask if it was true, as reported, that the book had been rejected by Murray. "I am the party to blame," continues J. J. Ruskin, "but I by no means regret the event. Books, like men, are often the better of beginning the world in adversity. If *Modern Painters* had been cradled in Albemarle Street, and fondled in the *Quarterly*, it might have been overlaid in the nursing—smothered with flattery."[1] The firm of Smith, Elder & Co., in which P. Stewart was then a partner, "accepted the proposal to publish with alacrity, and thus was inaugurated Ruskin's thirty years' close personal connexion with Smith, Elder & Co., and more especially with George Smith, on whose shoulders the whole responsibilities of the firm were soon to fall."[2]

Murray's answer to J. J. Ruskin is of additional interest as showing the current taste of the time. To place the first volumes of *Modern Painters* in their historical position, it is necessary to consider the opposing forces which they had to combat, as well as the compelling influences of the author's idiosyncrasy. The public, then, "cared little about Turner."

[1] In the Memoir of George Smith in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (Supplementary vol. i., 1901, p. xvi.; p. 11 of the privately circulated reprint), it is stated that Ruskin's father "failed to induce John Murray to issue it on commission." This statement is, it will be seen, somewhat misleading.

[2] *Memoir of George Smith*, p. 11. George Smith at this time was living on Denmark Hill. Ruskin had already had some dealings with the firm through *Friendship's Offering* (see Vol. II. p. xix., and *cf.* p. xlii.). "The late Mr. Smith" (*i.e.* George Smith's father, who died in 1846), wrote J. J. Ruskin, "offered to get Murray to take it if I particularly wished it." When the book had appeared and made its mark, Murray desired Ruskin to contribute to the *Quarterly*. This he declined to do, as a letter from his father (June 26, 1845) shows; though subsequently, and in a different connexion, he did write for the *Review* (see *Præterita*, ii. ch. x. § 192).

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It has sometimes been supposed that Ruskin introduced Turner to the English public. It is true that the two names will ever be associated, owing to the conjunction whereby the original genius of the artist found in his own day the genius of a critic, no less original, to understand and to interpret him. But Turner had become a Royal Academician nearly twenty years before Ruskin was born. He was famous and wealthy long before Ruskin's book appeared. Ruskin did not discover Turner in the sense that he discovered Carpaccio and re-discovered Tintoret; but he did for him a service even more conspicuous. He rescued him not from obscurity, but from misunderstanding. He was not the first to praise Turner, but he intervened in order that he should be praised rightly. It was, as we have seen, the change to Turner's later manner, and the contemptuous misunderstanding of this change on the part of the critics, that called Ruskin into the fray.[1] He stemmed the tide of war, and in doing so he laid the foundations not only of a better appreciation of a great master, and of broader views of the art of painting, but also generally of saner and more scientific criticism. "Turner's impressions displease us," said the critics of the day; "we have never seen such things; they do not conform to existing rules and traditional conventions." Ruskin's was the more modern attitude. He discarded authority and looked to principle. "What does the artist mean?" he asked; "what laws does he exemplify? what is he driving at?" In answering such questions, Ruskin, as has been truly said, produced "the first notable work of general criticism in the spirit of the modern age,—the pioneer and standard-bearer in the war against Philistinism and prejudice."[2] "But where is your brown tree?" was Sir George Beaumont's question to Constable. Sir George looked at pictures through eyes attuned only to the tone of certain ancient masters. Ruskin taught us to look at nature and to consider pictures by the light of the truths of nature.

Again, while current criticism ridiculed Turner's later manner, "the public called for works on the German School." At that time the scheme for painting the walls of the new Houses of Parliament was on foot; it was to the German painter, Cornelius, that the British Government first applied. Among British artists, Maclise was the great

[1] See *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. Appendix 11, where in reaffirming (1851) his faith in Turner, Ruskin says: "I like his later pictures, up to the year 1845, the best; and believe that those persons who only like his early pictures, do not, in fact, like him at all. They do *not* like that which is essentially *his*. . . . His entire power is best represented by . . . pictures . . . painted exactly at the time when the public and the press were together loudest in abuse of him." *Cf.* Ruskin's letter to the *Artist and Amateur's Magazine* in Appendix ii., below, p. 654.

[2] See an essay on "The Genesis of *Modern Painters*," by W. G. Collingwood, in *Igdrasil* (Journal of the Ruskin Reading Guild), vol. i., 1890, p. 7.

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painter of the day. The Italians, and especially the early Italians, were little known. Those, it must be remembered, were days before photography had familiarized the eyes of the general public with Italian masterpieces. "There was no discrimination then," says Mr. Holman Hunt, "with artists, more than with the public, that Guido, Parmigiano, and Le Brun, Murillo, Sassoferrato, and such crew, were birds of a different feather to their great idols, so that the name of the princely Urbinite was made to cover all conventional art."[1] In this work of discrimination also Ruskin was a pioneer, and in considering the warmth of his invectives it is necessary to remember the contrary opinions which he was assailing. In the field of landscape, the Dutch and the French masters of the seventeenth century were the accepted models. It was by their standard that Turner was found wanting; to clear the ground for Turner, he sought to demolish the others. This led him, no doubt, into some exaggeration of blame and into excess of emphasis. He has been accused—to take an instance typical of many others—of unfairness towards Claude,[2] and it may be that he strained some points unduly against that master.[3] But any one who will take the trouble to read all Ruskin's references[4] will see that he was by no means blind to Claude's merits. He did full justice to Claude's amenity and pensive grace; to the beauty of his skies and the skill and charm of his aërial effects. Ruskin's main work in relation to accepted masters was, however—and necessarily from his point of view—destructive. At the time when he began to write *Modern Painters*, Claude was accounted the prince of all landscape painters. The estimate of Claude against which Ruskin protested may be found in Goethe. "Claude Lorraine," he said, "knew the real world thoroughly, even to its smallest detail, and he made use of it to express the world contained in his own beautiful soul. He stands to nature in a double relation,—he is both her slave and her master: her slave, by the material means which he is obliged to employ to make himself understood; her master, because he subordinates these material means to a well-reasoned inspiration, to which he makes them serve as instruments." And elsewhere, Goethe expresses his admiration for the depth and grasp of Claude's powers. Ruskin, in vindicating the greater sweep and depth of Turner's genius, fastened with all the emphasis of an advocate upon the weak points in Claude's artistic and intellectual armoury. By so doing he cleared the ground for a truer appreciation of Claude, as well as

[1] *Contemporary Review*, April 1886, p. 476.
[2] See *The National Gallery*, edited by Sir E. J. Poynter, P.R.A., 1899, vol. i. p. 192.
[3] See, *e.g.*, below, p. 113 *n*.
[4] Ruskin himself brought them together in *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. v. § 10.

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of Turner. It is probably a true criticism that Ruskin's judgments upon painters will stand more in what he has praised than in what he has blamed;[1] but, at any rate, in reading those judgments it is necessary to remember the conditions and circumstances of their delivery.

It is remarkable, in view of the heretical teaching of *Modern Painters* (as it then seemed), that the first volume made its mark so quickly. The very audacity of its criticisms, and the air of confident authority with which they were pronounced, must have carried much of the ground by storm; but what impressed the critics most was the closeness of the author's reasoning, his wealth of illustrative reference, and the force and beauty of his style. One of the earliest notices of the book was in the *Globe* newspaper (Aug. 30, 1843), which pronounced the volume to be "the production of one who is profoundly versed in the principles as well as in the mechanical details of the art; . . . it is equally clear that he has studied nature with the most enthusiastic devotion, and in localities and under circumstances especially propitious to the study. . . . It is evidently the work of a poet as well as of a painter, and one of no common order. The dryness which would appear to be almost inseparable from a disquisition on art is utterly lost in the bursts of startling eloquence, poetic feeling, and touching pathos, which everywhere abound in this beautiful book." The *Weekly Chronicle* (Sept. 16, 1843), in the course of a very long review, "knew not how enough to commend the beautiful spirit of the work." The author showed "great brilliancy of illustration, a thorough analytical mind, a minute observance of nature; and a great practical acquaintance with the subject he is discussing renders his pen at all times instructive and interesting. Few books, indeed, that we have ever read, purely dedicated to an analysis of painting, contain such an abundance of materials, or evince such a profundity of thought in its reading, as the work before us." This reviewer went on to make some objections on particular points; and to these Ruskin replied in a letter here reprinted (Appendix ii., p. 641). The *Churchman* (Oct. 1843, pp. 671–673) saw in its daring an evidence of genius: "it is no

[1] Sir William Richmond, R.A., K.C.B., son of George Richmond, has an interesting reminiscence in this connexion. "I remember upon one occasion when a tirade of the art of Claude was pouring out of his mouth like a cataract, in order that he might put Turner upon a yet higher pedestal, that my father became irritated. He turned sharply to Ruskin and said, 'Ruskin, when your criticism is constructive you talk like an angel; when it is destructive you declaim like a demon.' This vexed the impulsive thinker, but years afterwards he said to me, 'Your father once administered a very just rebuke when I talked nonsense about Claude.' Ruskin had real modesty, for no one was more critical of himself than he" (*St. George*, vol. v. 1902, p. 289).

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common mind that can soar above the mists and delusions of traditionary prejudice, if we may use the phrase, and such a mind we have here." The *Gentleman's Magazine* (Nov. 1843, pp. 451–469), in the course of an expository article, praised the author's "ingenuity of reasoning, profuse display of examples and illustration, and elaborate richness of description and imagery." The *Church of England Quarterly* (vol. xv. Jan. 1844, pp. 213–221) declared the volume to be "the production of a poet as well as a painter," and "one of the most valuable, because one of the most practical and philosophic treatises on art that have appeared in modern times." The *Spectator* (Dec. 7, 1844, pp. 1167–1169) was later in the field, but ultimately had a long review, commending "this able and excellent treatise on landscape painting to all, whether artists or amateurs, who desire to have their perceptions of the beauties of nature and their judgment of pictures enlightened, by the observation and reasoning of a writer possessing exact and extensive knowledge of his subject, with refined taste and elevated views." The *Artist and Amateur's Magazine* (vol. i. pp. 257–264) was of the same opinion. "That this work is possessed of more than ordinary merits may be fairly judged," it said, "by the many public notices it has received, and by the variety of opinions it has called forth. . . . It is, taking it with all its defects, by far the most intelligent, philosophic, and comprehensive work on the subject of Art that has issued from the press of the present day. . . . It is impossible, in the whole range of writing on the subject, to find anything more enlightened in perception, more refined in feeling, more profoundly philosophic, more deeply learned in the mysteries of Art, more illustrative of its capabilities and powers, more explanatory of its means as connected with one great branch of its practice, than this short essay affords; nor is it possible to give the thoughts it contains a more defined and perfect form, or to clothe and grace them with all the resources of language—all that is comprehensive, forcible, appropriate, complete." Ruskin contributed two papers to this *Magazine* at the time; they are here reprinted in Appendix ii. (pp. 645–661). *Fraser's Magazine* (March 1846, pp. 358–368) expounded the arguments of the volume at length, and called it "perhaps the most remarkable book which has ever been published in reference to art. . . . We cannot close this article on the graduate's volume without referring to the singular eloquence and graphic power displayed in very many of its passages. It is evidently not the work of a critic only, but of a painter and poet."[1] But none of the reviews gave so much pleasure at Denmark Hill as that in

[1] Other reviews of a similar tenor may be found in *The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1843, in *Atlas*, and in other periodicals of the time.

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Britannia (Dec. 9, 1843, p. 778), which spoke of the book in the following terms:—

"This is the bold title of a bold work, a general challenge to the whole body of cognoscenti, dilettanti, and all haranguers, essayists, and critics, on the arts of Italy, Flanders, and England for the last hundred years. Of course it will raise the whole *posse comitatus* of the pencil in arms. . . . Yet we shall not be surprised if the time should arrive when the controversialists will be turned into converts, and the heresy be dignified with the honour of the true belief. . . We pronounce the volume to be one of the most interesting and important which we have ever seen on the subject, exhibiting a singular insight into the true principles of beauty, order, and taste—a work calculated more than *any other* performance in the language to make men inquire into the nature of these sensations of the sublime, the touching, and the delightful, and to lead them from doubt into knowledge, without feeling the length of a way so scattered over with the flowers of an eloquent, forcible, and imaginative style."[1]

These reviews accurately reflected the impression made by the book upon understanding readers. It may be interesting, however, to state that the actual sale of the book was slow. Of the edition published in May 1843, 500 copies were printed. By the end of the year only 150 had been sold.[2] It must then have made its way more rapidly, for the second edition was issued in the following March. But if Ruskin's audience was at first few, it was fit. Among the first to read it was Wordsworth, who regarded Ruskin as "a brilliant writer," and placed the volume in his lending library at Rydal Mount.[3] A copy of the volume lay on Rogers' library table. Tennyson saw it there and was instantly attracted by it:—

> "Another book I long very much to see (he wrote to Moxon, the publisher) is that on the superiority of the modern painters to the old ones, and the greatness of Turner as an artist, by an Oxford undergraduate, I think. I do not much wish to buy it, it may be dear;

[1] Ruskin and his father attributed this notice to Dr. Croly (for whom see Vol. I. p. 409). "Since I have had the pleasure of seeing you," wrote J. J. Ruskin to W. H. Harrison (Dec. 12), "I have read with attention the critique in the *Britannia* on *Modern Painters*; the origin cannot be doubted. One would be almost as proud of giving occasion for so masterly and witty a display of critical powers as of producing a tolerable book. . . . If the Book had been abused by all the Press, this would have compensated alone. . . . I write to you *confidentially*, and if you deem it worth while you can name the subject to Dr. Croly, to whom my son, not owning the Book, cannot well express his gratitude or his admiration."

[2] *Memoir of George Smith*, p. 11; in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplementary Volume I., 1901, p. xvi.

[3] See William Knight's *Life of Wordsworth*, 1889, ii. 334, iii. 243. For Ruskin's introduction to Wordsworth at Oxford, see Vol. II. p. xxvii.

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perhaps you could borrow it for me out of the London Library, or from Rogers. I saw it lying on his table. I would promise to take care of it, and send it back in due time."[1]

Rogers himself must have been struck by the book, for in the spring of 1844 Ruskin was two or three times invited to his house, and a correspondence followed.[2] Sir Henry Taylor, author of *Philip van Artevelde*, was another early reader of the book, and he passed on its praises to another distinguished poet. He wrote to Mr. Aubrey de Vere, begging him to read "a book which seems to me to be far more deeply founded in its criticism of art than any other that I have met with, . . . written with great power and eloquence, and a spirit of the most diligent investigation. . . . I am told that the author's name is Ruskin, and that he was considered at college as an odd sort of man who would never do anything."[3] Sara Coleridge, in a letter to a friend, recommends "a thick volume by a graduate of Oxford." "The author," she says, "has not converted, and yet he has delighted me. . . . His descriptions of nature in reference to art are delightful; clouds, rocks, earth, water, foliage, he examines and describes in a manner which shows him to be quite a man of genius, full of knowledge, and that fineness of observation which genius produces."[4] Miss Mitford, who afterwards became a dear friend of the author, was also an early admirer of *Modern Painters*.[5] She sent word of it to the Brownings in Italy. They were already engaged upon the book, deeply interested, but sometimes acutely disagreeing with its judgments:—

"The letter (wrote Mrs. Browning) in which you mentioned your Oxford student caught us in the midst of his work upon art. Very vivid, very graphic, full of sensibility, but inconsequent in some of the reasoning, it seemed to me, and rather flashy than full in the metaphysics. Robert, who knows a good deal about art, to which knowledge I of course have no pretence, could agree with him only by snatches, and we, both of us, standing before a very expressive picture of Domenichino's (the 'David'—at Fano), wondered how he could

[1] *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*, 1897, i. 223. Tennyson and Ruskin met in after years, and conversations between them have been recorded (see index volume). Tennyson was once asked to name the six authors in whom the stateliest English prose was to be found. He replied: Hooker, Bacon, Milton, Jeremy Taylor, De Quincey, Ruskin (*ibid.* ii. 415).

[2] For Ruskin's first and apparently earlier introduction to Rogers, see *Præterita*, i. ch. v. § 105. His letters to Rogers are given in a later volume of this edition.

[3] Collingwood's *Life of Ruskin*, 1900, p. 94.

[4] Letter cited in the *Westminster Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1900.

[5] *The Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford*, by Rev. A. G. L'Estrange, 1882, ii. 107.

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blaspheme so against a great artist.[1] Still, he is no ordinary man, and for a critic to be so much of a poet is a great thing. Also, we have by no means, I should imagine, seen the utmost of his stature."[2]

Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë also read Ruskin together, though this was at a somewhat later date, and were at one in admiration of his burning prophecies. "Hitherto," wrote Miss Brontë, "I have only had instinct to guide me in judging of art; I feel now as if I had been walking blindfold—this book seems to give me eyes. I *do* wish I had pictures within reach by which to test the new sense. Who can read these glowing descriptions of Turner's works without longing to see them? . . . I like this author's style much; there is both energy and beauty in it. I like himself, too, because he is such a hearty admirer. He does not give himself half-measure of praise or vituperation. He eulogizes, he reverences with his whole soul."[3] "Ruskin seems to me," she wrote in another letter, "one of the few genuine writers, as distinguished from book-makers of the age. His earnestness even amuses me in certain passages; for I cannot help laughing to think how utilitarians will fume and fret over his deep, serious (and as *they* will think), fanatical reverence for Art. That pure and severe mind you ascribed to him speaks in every line. He writes like a consecrated Priest of the Abstract and Ideal."[4] It was as a prophet that George Eliot also came to regard the author of *Modern Painters*. "I venerate him," she wrote, "as one of the great teachers of the day. The grand doctrines of truth and sincerity in art, and the nobleness and solemnity of our human life, which he teaches with the inspiration of a Hebrew prophet, must be stirring up young minds in a promising way."[5] Among the young minds whom the appearance of *Modern Painters* greatly stirred were many who were destined to have influence in their turn on the minds of others. To Liddell, afterwards Dean of Christ Church, the first volume was "like a revelation."[6] To it and its successors a great headmaster owed "more of thought and fruitful power than to any other book or any other living man."[7] Robertson of Brighton found in Ruskin's early writings on art "a sense

[1] See below, p. 184 *n*.
[2] *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. by F. G. Kenyon, 1897, i. 384.
[3] Letter to W. S. Williams (of Smith, Elder & Co), printed in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Aug. 1891, vol. lxiv., p. 280.
[4] *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, by Mrs. Gaskell, pocket ed., 1889, p. 368; *cf.* pp. 345 and 383.
[5] *George Eliot's Life*, by J. W. Cross, 1885, ii. 7.
[6] See below, p. 668 *n*.
[7] *Life of Edward Thring* (of Uppingham), by G. R. Parkin, 1898, ii. 243; and *cf.* p. 245. *Cf.* Dean Farrar's expression of his debt to Ruskin, *St. George*, vol. ii. (1899) p. 3.

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of soothing," "more precious than even works which treat of scientific truth, such as chemistry, for *they* do not feed the heart." The following letter from him refers more particularly to the first volume of *Modern Painters*:—

> "I rejoice that you have taken up Ruskin; only let me ask you to read it very slowly, to resolve not to finish more than a few pages each day. One or two of the smaller chapters are quite enough—a long chapter is enough for two days, except where it is chiefly made up of illustration from pictures; those can only be read with minute attention when you have the print or picture to which he refers you; and those which you can so see, in the National Gallery, Dulwich, &c., you should study, with the book, one or two at a time. The book is worth reading in this way: study it—think over each chapter, and examine yourself mentally, with shut eyes, upon its principles, putting down briefly on paper the heads, and getting up each day the principles you gained the day before. This is not the way to read many books, but it is the way to read much; and one read in this way, carefully, would do more good, and remain longer fructifying, than twenty skimmed. Do not read it, however, with slavish acquiescence; with deference, for it deserves it, but not more. And when you have got its principles woven into the memory, hereafter, by comparison and consideration, you will be able to correct and modify for yourself."[1]

It was thus that among an ever-widening circle Ruskin's book came to be read. At the time the critical opinion which probably exercised most influence was that of Sydney Smith, who, as Canon Dale reported to J. J. Ruskin, "spoke in the highest terms of your son's work, on a public occasion, and in presence of several distinguished literary characters. He said it was a work of transcendent talent, presented the most original views, and the most elegant and powerful language, and would work a complete revolution in the world of taste."[2]

The fructifying effect which the first volume of *Modern Painters* exercised on the minds of general readers, it exercised also on many a young artist. From the artistic memoirs of the time, two instances may be given—typical of many others. The book came to him, Mr. Hodgson, R.A., tells us, "in the light of a revelation, as a new gospel to the world of art."[3] One day, says Mr. Holman Hunt, in describing

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, by Stopford A. Brooke, 1874, pp. 302, 305.
[2] *Præterita*, ii. ch. ix. § 165. See also the letter from Ruskin there given as a note.
[3] *Fifty Years of British Art*, by J. E. Hodgson, R.A., 1887, p. 38.

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his student years, "a fellow-student, one Telfer, spoke to me of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, and ended by lending it for a few days. . . . To get through the book I had to sit up most of the night more than once, and I returned it before I had got half the good there was in it; but of all readers, none so strongly as myself could have felt that it was written expressly for him. When it had gone, the echo of its words stayed with me, and pealed a further meaning and value in their inspiration whenever my more solemn feelings were touched in any way."[1] Hunt must thus have read the first volume soon after its publication; his personal acquaintance with the author came some years later. The reception of the book in the circle of painters in which Ruskin and his father moved at the time is described in *Præterita* (ii. ch. ix.). It was somewhat reserved. It was not until October 1844 that Turner himself spoke to Ruskin about the book. Ruskin's note of the occasion gives a characteristic glimpse of the painter:—

> *October* 20, '44.—Have not written a word [*i.e.* in his diary] since returning from Chamouni, for my days pass monotonously now. Only I ought to note my being at Windus's on Thursday, to dine with Turner and Griffith alone, and Turner's thanking me for my book for the first time. We drove home together, reached his house about one in the morning. Boy-like, he said he would give sixpence to find the Harley Street gates shut; but on our reaching his door, vowed he'd be damned if we shouldn't come in and have some sherry. We were compelled to obey, and so drank healths again, exactly as the clock struck one, by the light of a single tallow candle in the under room—the wine, by-the-bye, first-rate.

It was not in Turner's nature to say much; it is characteristic again of him that among the things he said on this or some other occasion was that his champion "didn't know how difficult it is," and had been too hard on his fellow-artists.[2] Turner had probably read the book some time before, for on May 15 (1843) Ruskin notes:—

> "Called on Turner to-day, who was particularly gracious. I think he must have read my book, and have been pleased with it, by his tone."

In the Academy of 1843, which opened at the time that the book appeared, Turner exhibited pictures which Ruskin considered among his finest works—especially the "Sun of Venice going to Sea" and the

[1] "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: a Fight for Art," by W. Holman Hunt, in *The Contemporary Review*, April 1886, p. 478.
[2] *Lectures on Art*, § 8.

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"St. Benedetto looking to Fusina";[1] but the press was still bitterly scornful. Ruskin notes in his diary:—

> *May* 10 [1843].—Yesterday at Academy . . . Turner greater than he has been these five years.
>
> *May* 13.—Nothing but ignorant, unmeasured, vapid abuse of Turner in the periodicals. I believe it is spite, for I cannot conceive ignorance so total in any number of men capable of writing two words of English.

As the years went on, Ruskin's advocacy in large measure prevailed. "Works by Turner forgotten by the ordinary public were recalled. . . . His timid admirers now grew bolder; his enemies were gradually silenced."[2] But Turner himself was nearing the end of his course; by 1845 his powers showed obvious decline; and he died, says Ruskin, "before even the superficial effect of my work was visible."[3]

With regard to other artists mentioned with critical approval by Ruskin, "the total group of Modern Painters were," he says, "more startled than flattered by my schismatic praise; the modest ones, such as Fielding, Prout, and Stanfield, felt that it was more than they deserved,—and, moreover, a little beside the mark and out of their way; the conceited ones, such as Harding and De Wint, were angry at the position given to Turner; and I am not sure that any of them were ready even to endorse George Richmond's consoling assurance to my father, that I should know better in time."[4] Among the artists who wrote to Ruskin's father about the book—the authorship of which was not allowed by paternal pride long to remain in obscurity—was Samuel Prout. In a letter given in *Præterita*, he is "pleased to find that he has come off beautifully." In writing, however, to Ruskin himself, Prout seems to have shown some little chagrin. In a letter here printed in Appendix iii. (p. 662), Ruskin explains his position. It was perhaps in view partly of such criticism from his artist-friends that in the third edition of the volume (1846) the author introduced longer notices of Prout and others (see below, pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii.).[5]

The reception of the first volume of *Modern Painters* was, then, on the whole, very favourable. But there were exceptions. The old school of

[1] See below, p. 251 *n*.

[2] Thornbury's *Life of Turner*, 1877, p. 409. "I am glad, and sorry," wrote Ruskin to his father (Baveno, August 29, 1845), "to hear of Turner's Gallery being so cleared; I am sure nobody ever worked to less selfish ends than I;" and *cf.* the note from his diary cited on p. 243.

[3] *The Mystery of Life and its Arts*. See also the Postscript to this volume, p. 631.

[4] *Præterita*, ii. ch. ix. § 171.

[5] "I am glad," wrote J. J. Ruskin to W. H. Harrison (July 28, 1846), "my son has been able to say so much of Prout with truth in new edition. He has well examined the works of those he has now made any additional remarks on, I believe."

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conventional art and ribald criticism did not surrender at sight. The principal champions in the crusade against Turner were the *Athenæum* and *Blackwood's Magazine*. Ruskin's first volume was not calculated to conciliate them. Attacks on Turner now became combined with attacks on his prophet. The *Athenæum* devoted two reviews to the book (Nos. 849 and 850, Feb. 3 and 10, 1844)—written in the semi-facetious and wholly slashing style then in vogue. The author of *Modern Painters* reminded the reviewer "of a whirling Dervish who at the end of his well-sustained reel falls with a higher jump and a shriller shriek into a fit." "What more light-headed rhodomontade," he asked, was ever "scrawled except upon the walls, or halloed except through the wards, of Bedlam?" It was admitted, however, that the author wrote "eloquent skimble-skamble" better than some other professors of the art. *Blackwood* (Oct. 1843, pp. 485–503) was equally facetious; suggesting also a lunatic asylum as the author's provenance, and ridiculing his language as "very readily learned in the Fudge School." "We do not think," said the reviewer, "that landscape painters will either gain or lose much by the publication of this volume, unless it be some mortification to be so sillily lauded as some of our very respectable painters are. We do not think that the pictorial world, either in taste or practice, will be Turnerized by this palpably fulsome, nonsensical praise."[1]

Ruskin took these sallies in the spirit of one eager for the fray. His father, on the other hand, was distressed by them, and, like a cautious and prudent man of business, was doubtful of the expediency of controversy. At an early period he tried to screen his son from the sight of adverse criticisms;[2] now, the parts were reversed. "We had seen the *Athenæum* before," writes Ruskin to W. H. Harrison (1844). "I do not forward it to my father, simply because the later he is in seeing it, the less time he will have to fret himself about what is to come *next week*. In fact, if by any means he could be got to overlook these things, it would be all the better, for they worry him abominably, and then *he* worries *me*. Do not send anything of the kind in future unless he fishes it out for himself. I believe you know pretty well how much *I* care for such matters." He cared for them only as blows to be returned, as errors still to be corrected. "*Blackwood* sends back its petty thunders," wrote

[1] Another equally hostile review appeared in *The Art Union Monthly Journal* (June 1843). The reviewer was especially indignant at the Graduate's criticisms of Maclise, and said:—

"From this new teacher the public may hope nothing—the beginning, end, and middle of his career is Turner, in whose praise he is vehement and indiscriminate; when speaking of other artists not in the vein of his own taste, he hesitates not at indulgence in scurrilities, such as have not disgraced the columns of any newspaper."

[2] See Vol. II. p. xxxv.

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his father to W. H. Harrison (Dec. 12, 1843); "I regret to see that in a letter to Rippingille he has given *Blackwood* another thrust. He believes the critic of paintings and writer of the article on *Modern Painters* to be a Rev. —— Eagles, or some such name, near Bristol."[1] The letter to Rippingille's *Artist and Amateur's Magazine* is here reprinted in Appendix ii. (see p. 647). "I am only desirous," writes Ruskin's father again (Jan. 2, 1844), "of keeping my son out of broils or brawls or personalities. He can write on Principles and Theories without meddling with any one—no man becomes distinguished by making enemies, though he may by beating them when made to his hand. I wish him to be playful, not spiteful, towards all opponents." It was in the preface to the second edition that Ruskin gave his critics his tit-for-tat. He was at work upon it during the winter of 1843–44. "Put my rod nicely in pickle for *Blackwood*," he writes in his diary on Dec. 29; adding on Jan. 20, "Wish I could get my preface done; cannot write contemptuously enough, and time flies."[2] On March 14 it was finished; it appeared in the second edition, issued on March 30.[3]

[1] The Rev. John Eagles, author and artist, who had studied in Italy, trying to form his style on Gaspard Poussin and Salvator Rosa; he was a contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* from 1831 to 1855. That Ruskin's conjecture was correct appears from Mrs. Oliphant's Memoirs of the Blackwoods. She gives a curious letter (no date) from Richard to John Blackwood, suggesting that there should be a second review, conceived in a different style from that of Eagles, and that Ruskin himself should be asked to contribute, as he "had heard he would be a great acquisition to the magazine" (*William Blackwood and his Sons*, 1897, ii. 403).

[2] Ruskin continued in after years to enjoy a dig at *Blackwood*; see, *e.g.*, *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xviii. § 26 *n.*, and vol. iv. App. i. But the magazine (as is the way with such) had the last word. Upon Ruskin's death, it published a final attack upon him quite in the old style (March 1900).

[3] It appears from a letter of J. J. Ruskin to W. H. Harrison (March 27, 1844) that a few copies of the preface to the second edition were struck off for private circulation. The following extracts from Ruskin's diary refer to the preface to the second edition, and reflect the alternate moods of satisfaction and the reverse which accompanied the composition of it:—

> *Jan.* 27.—Wrote a little—badly. . . . Can't tell how it is, my writing gets more and more obscure and a labour to me. Perhaps in my early papers I did not see so far.
>
> *Feb.* 2.—. . . Certainly this is not a bright time with me. I write half a line sometimes in half-an-hour; I scratch it out again.
>
> *Feb.* 10.—A most successful day; wrote much and well, and carried my Sir R. I. forward splendidly and easily.
>
> *Feb.* 16.—A good day. Wrote well; saw my way through preface.
>
> *Feb.* 22.—Wrote on with my preface; but cannot get way in it; it labours and sticks on my hands wofully.
>
> *March* 7.—Got all the difficult part of my preface over.
>
> *March* 14.—Finished my preface at last—satisfactorily, but exhausted: shall do nothing now but draw.
>
> *March* 30.—My second edition is out to-night, and I have nothing but my new volume to attend to.

"My Sir R. I." means a drawing which he was doing for Sir Robert Inglis, for whom see *Academy Notes*, 1855, *s.* No. 159.

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Neither praise nor blame diverted Ruskin from the path he had marked out for himself. He fought his hostile critics with a will, and he accepted his recognition gladly. He was conscious of his merits, but also of his limitations. He was confident because he felt that he had the root of the matter in him; but he knew at the same time that he was a learner still. The completion of the first portion of his essay was to him a spur to further studies. These will be described in the introduction to the next volume.[1] It is necessary, however, to anticipate here so far as is required to explain the successive changes in the text of the first volume. A second edition was issued, as already stated, in March 1844. The variations in the text were few; Ruskin's standpoint was still the same. He did not travel abroad in 1843; his home studies, so far as art was concerned, were such as have already been described. In 1844, as already stated, he returned to Chamouni, and continued his studies from nature. In 1845 he went abroad, for the first time without his parents, and studied Italian art. He wrote home daily letters eloquent of the intimacy between father and son; these letters, as well as a diary in which he made notes of pictures, have now been drawn upon to illustrate passages added to the text in the edition of 1846. This tour profoundly affected his outlook, as will be seen in the next volume. The second volume was issued in April 1846. Ruskin had already left for the Continent, where he remained from April to September. His parents on this occasion accompanied him, and he went over much the same ground as in the preceding year. He revised the proofs of the third edition of the first volume at Sestri,[2] and some of the passages inserted therein were written during his travels.[3] "My son," writes J. J. Ruskin from Genoa, July 14, "has greatly altered, and I hope improved, the volume, and added much new criticism; it has cost him no little labour." His faithful mentor, W. H. Harrison, passed the edition finally for press; it appeared on September 16, 1846. Passages from Ruskin's letters and diaries, written abroad, are cited in notes to the following pages, at places where they illustrate additions made in the third edition. It was very largely revised. The author's more extended studies in Italian art are reflected in the new version of pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. (pp. 169 *seq.*). The chapter on "Water, as painted by the Ancients," was almost entirely re-written (see p. 495 *n.*); and there were many minor alterations (see, *e.g.*, pp. 117, 126, 277, 316, 322, 401, 435, 444, 545). The fourth edition (1848) shows little variation from the third;

[1] A glimpse in advance has already been given in the Letter to a College Friend of June 17, 1843, describing a typical day's work and reading, Vol. I. p. 493.

[2] *Præterita*, ii. ch. ix. § 174.

[3] See below, pt. ii. sec. v. ch. i. §§ 3 *n.*, 7.

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the fifth (1851) was again largely revised, and a postscript was added (p. 631). In later editions the alterations were very slight, but to the edition of 1873 Ruskin added a new preface. The prefaces to the first and second editions were retained by the author in subsequent editions. The prefaces to the third and 1873 editions were not; they are here printed, in smaller type, after the earlier prefaces. Full bibliographical details are contained in the note following this introduction (pp. 52–54). The foregoing summary is given here in order to remind the reader once more that in the first volume of *Modern Painters*, as it now stands, he has before him a work put together by the author at different times and under different influences.

It is this fact (together with difficulties about the illustrations in vols. iii. to v.) which explains Ruskin's frequent changes of mind and plan with regard to the republication of *Modern Painters*. It will be seen that already in 1846, in the preface to the third edition (p. 53), Ruskin felt some qualms with regard to reissuing the first volume in its original form. By the time he had written the second volume, he had in some respects outgrown, as it were, the first. Then, after many years, came the third, fourth, and (after another pause) the fifth, volumes. He had now, in turn, outgrown the second volume. In particular, he had outlived the religious phase in which it was written, and had come to deplore its sectarian narrowness. Moreover, the fourth and fifth volumes covered, in large part, the same ground as the first volume. An appearance of uniformity in plan is indeed preserved by a division of the subject into ideas of truth (vol. i.), beauty (vols. ii. iv. and part of v.), and relation (vol. v.); but these divisions were in the later volumes hardly more than formal, and, in fact, vols. iv. and v., in their analysis of mountains, clouds, and trees, treat, on a more extended scale, and with corrections, the subject-matter of much of vol. i.[1] Hence Ruskin had some doubts whether it was well to let the less complete treatment of these matters given in vol. i. stand beside the fuller treatment in later volumes. Again, in other respects—besides the estimate of particular painters, already noticed (p. xxi.)[2]—Ruskin came to be dissatisfied with his first volume. He felt that its classification of the means by which art makes its appeal—

[1] For passages thus requiring correction, see below, pp. 372 *n.*, 447 *n.*

[2] Ruskin notices his changes of opinion with regard to ancient masters in the preface to vol. v. of *Modern Painters*, and again in *Fors Clavigera*, Letter lxxvi. With regard to *Modern Painters*, the reader of this volume will be able to trace many modifications in the collation of various editions. In a letter to his father from Venice (Sept. 18, 1845), Ruskin, referring to his studies for the second volume, says :—

> "I meant by extinguishing the former book that I would try to outshine it, not to contradict it. I have nothing to retract, except the implied overpraise of Landseer."

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ideas of power, imitation, truth, beauty, and relation—was needlessly complicated and over subtle.[1] He felt also that he had allowed too little weight to ideas of power, and that the importance which he had rightly attributed to the subject might nevertheless be open to misinterpretation.[2] Some of these points were cleared up in his Oxford Lectures, and especially in the course entitled "Readings in *Modern Painters*." Some references to this course (for which the author's notes have been found among his MSS.) are given as notes in this volume;[3] the lectures themselves, as they deal also with many extraneous matters, and are characteristic of the author's method in his partly extempore courses, are reserved for publication among the Oxford Lectures. In other matters, the irregular and discursive treatment, consequential on the composition of a treatise at intervals during seventeen years, involved him, he perceived, in appearances of inconsistency and risks of misunderstanding. He dealt partly with this source of confusion by giving in later volumes harmonies and summaries of his statements—such as his estimate of Claude, his theory of the place of colour in art, his views on "finish."[4] But not all readers are careful and patient, and Ruskin felt that the irregular form of his work was likely to detract somewhat from its usefulness.[5]

Under the influence of this conviction Ruskin set to work at various times between 1860 and 1884 to revise *Modern Painters* thoroughly, and more especially to recast and rearrange (and largely to discard) the contents of volume one. Two copies of the book, which Ruskin kept by him for this purpose, are preserved at Brantwood. They have been drawn upon for notes to the following pages; some further account of them will be found in the Appendix v., describing the manuscript sources to which the editors have had access in preparing this edition.

But during these years, as always, Ruskin had a great many tasks on hand at the same time. The beginning of new books attracted him more than the revision of old ones. By 1873 he had not completed any redraft of *Modern Painters*, and demands for a new edition of the book (then long out of print) were pressing. Accordingly he consented, as explained in the preface to the "New Edition" of that year (p. 54), to the republication of the book. It will be noticed that at the beginning of this preface he speaks of the edition as being "in its original form," but, at the end, as being the last "in its complete form." Had he said in both sentences "its *original* form," some future difficulties would have

[1] The systematization, he said, was "affected and forced." See below, p. 93 *n.*; and *cf.* "Readings in *Modern Painters*" (in a later volume of this edition).

[2] See below, p. 88 *n.*

[3] See below, pp. 86 *n.*, 93 *n.*

[4] See above, p. xxxiv., and below, pp. 162 *n.*, 176 *n.*

[5] His feelings in this matter are shown in the notes for an unwritten preface given in Appendix v., p. 683, and in the *Letters to Chesneau* there referred to.

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been avoided, as will presently be seen. Some of the original plates were becoming worn, and Ruskin was determined that they should not be used any more. Some were, in fact, destroyed. But it seems clear that, in 1873, Ruskin intended also never again to reissue *Modern Painters* in its original form, so far as the text was concerned.

This is shown by the preface to *Frondes Agrestes: Readings in 'Modern Painters,'* issued in 1875. The volume of selections was compiled by Miss Beever; many particulars in regard to it will be found in the volume containing Ruskin's letters to the compiler (*Hortus Inclusus*). His preface is here printed (p. 677). Passages from the first volume included in *Frondes* are indicated in the text of this volume, and any notes appended to them by Ruskin are given at the proper place. A collation of the selections is supplied in the Bibliographical Note (p. lxi.). Among Ruskin's MSS. a sheet has been found which was destined for some later edition of *Frondes*. It is printed here as bearing upon the subject now in hand:—

> "I add to this passage, for my own contribution to the book, one of my favourite pieces in the fifth volume, which will be useful, I think, in several ways: first, in its own matter; secondly, in showing how the last volumes of *Modern Painters* grew out of, and in real substance superseded a great part of the first; so that I cannot think it desirable to republish all the simpler expressions of the earlier volumes with the more elaborate later ones, though I am glad that my friend should choose from them what she pleases;—lastly, this passage will place in the reader's possession my views on the subject of pictorial composition, of which I wish my positive statement to be generally known, it being a notion much gone abroad among shallow artists that I despise composition.
>
> "Among shallow artists, I say, and those who read my first volume of *Modern Painters*, and not my last. For in justice to that first volume, I must finally say, that innocent and childish as it was, it knew itself thoroughly to be a 'first volume,' and entirely contemplated, from the first sentence of it, every statement of principle made to the end; contenting itself with doing its own business in its own time, and never for an instant supposing that a foolish public would ever think the first saying of a man at five-and-twenty all that he had got to say in his life."

The reference to the "favourite piece" in vol. v. is not given.[1]

The publication of *Frondes Agrestes* did not originate with Ruskin, and was no part of his schemes for dealing with *Modern Painters*. What he intended at the time was to make a number of separate books of it,

[1] Probably it was some portion of pt. viii. ch. i. ("The Law of Help"). In that chapter Ruskin insists strongly on the importance of composition in art (§ 10), and connects it with moral and political ideas in a passage (§ 6) which he often quoted (see, e.g., *Unto this Last*, § 54, and *Ethics of the Dust*, § 120).

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each dealing with a subject of its own. What the number was to be, and which the subjects, were questions which at different times he answered to himself in different ways. "I mean," he wrote in 1874, "to take the botany, the geology, the Turner defence, and the general art criticism of *Modern Painters*, as four separate books, cutting out nearly all the preaching, and a good deal of the sentiment."[1] The intention to collect the art teaching was reaffirmed in a public letter from Venice in 1876. "It is precisely," he said, "the Art teaching which I am now gathering out of the *Stones of Venice*, and will gather, God willing, out of *Modern Painters*, and reprint and reaffirm every syllable of it; but the Religious teaching of those books, and all the more for the sincerity of it, is misleading—sometimes even poisonous; always, in a manner, ridiculous; and shall not stand in any editions of them published under my own supervision."[2] At other times, however, Ruskin seems to have thought that the collection of his former art teaching was rendered unnecessary by his restatements of it in his Oxford courses.[3] But in 1883 he put out a separate edition of *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., with various alterations and deprecatory notes—as will be seen in the next volume of this edition. In the following year he took in hand some part of the design explained in the letter to Miss Beever of nine years earlier. This scheme is explained in the preface to *In Montibus Sanctis*, here reprinted in Appendix iv. (p. 678). He now proposed to collect the scientific matter from *Modern Painters* into three treatises, dealing respectively with Mountains, Clouds, and Trees. Ruskin was ever particular about his titles, and often got no further with a book or a chapter than hitting upon a title that attracted his fancy. "In Montibus Sanctis," for Mountains, and "Cœli Enarrant" for Clouds were selected[4]; a search for a similar title for Trees, to which he set one of his undergraduate friends, was indecisive, and this third part of the design was put aside. The other two sections started together in 1884. Of *In Montibus Sanctis* three chapters (in two separately issued Parts) were published. The preface, as already stated, is given here; the other matter, having nothing to do with volume one of *Modern Painters*, is reserved for inclusion in later volumes of this edition. *Cœli Enarrant* got no further than Part I. The preface and the chapters (i. and ii.) belong to volume four of *Modern Painters*. Yet another carving out of the old book—making six[5] in all—was at one time contemplated, namely, a collection of

[1] *Hortus Inclusus*, letter from Perugia of June 12 (1874).
[2] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter lxxvi., dated Venice, March 4, 1877.
[3] See Preface to *In Montibus Sanctis*, below, p. 678.
[4] Vulgate, Psalms, lxxxvii. 1 and xix. 1.
[5] Namely, Mountains, Clouds, Trees, the Turner Defence, General Art Criticism, and Education.

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passages dealing with education;[1] but this was never begun by the author.

Broken health and pressure of other pursuits and interests again prevented the recasting of *Modern Painters*; it did not get itself done either during the period 1860–73, or during 1873–84. In 1888, as in 1873, the demand for *Modern Painters* had again become insistent. Ruskin, who by this time had dispersed his inherited fortune, and was dependent upon his earnings as a writer, yielded to the demand, and a new edition of the book—in its original form, so far as the text went—was issued. Ruskin was at the time in bad health, and did not in any way supervise the preparation of the edition, though he wrote an epilogue for it. The edition differed, however, from its predecessors in the matter of the plates, several of which were re-engraved, while others were retouched. This fact, however, was held by some to be not sufficient to justify the reissue of the book, in view of the 1873 preface;[2] Ruskin dealt with this matter in his epilogue (Vol. VII. of this edition). A collation of all the editions, and an elaborate index, prepared by Mr. Wedderburn, was added in a supplementary volume. This collation, revised, corrected, and supplemented, is incorporated in the present edition, which is "complete" in a sense that is not applicable to any other edition. The index will be embodied in the final volume of this edition. It should be remembered that only volumes three, four, and five of *Modern Painters* were illustrated by the author. For remarks on the reproduction in this edition of the original illustrations, the reader is referred to the introductions to those volumes. Issues of the book after 1888 were reprints in one form or another of the edition of that year; for other particulars, mainly of typographical interest, the curious in such matters may consult the Bibliographical Note. Here, therefore, the long and somewhat complicated story of *Modern Painters* may close. It covers a period—from the first germ in 1836 to the author's epilogue in 1888—of fifty-two years.

It remains to explain the arrangement of the text and notes in this edition, of which arrangement the principal objects are to combine completeness for the collector with convenience for the student. The *text* is, in accordance with the general rule of the edition, that last revised

[1] See preface to *In Montibus Sanctis*, and cf. *Præterita*, iii. ch. ii. § 29 *n*. A collection of passages from Ruskin's Works generally, bearing on education, was made by Mr. W. Jolly in 1894, but this was unauthorized, and was withdrawn from sale shortly after publication.

[2] The subject was hotly discussed in *The Scots Observer*, June 1–July 27, 1889. The correspondence and editorial comments were afterwards printed as a fly-sheet, entitled "The Reissue of *Modern Painters*."

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by the author; *i.e.* the text of volume one as it appeared in the "New Edition" of the whole work issued in 1873; the edition of 1888 has been followed in its correction of a few obvious misprints. All substantial variations in successive editions are given in the body of the book. Minor variations are collected in Appendix vi. (p. 685). In the case of shorter passages, the various readings are given as footnotes to the page at the place where each occurs. The author's notes, added in *Frondes Agrestes*, are similarly given. Some longer passages are given in their entirety at the end of the chapters to which they severally belong. Not every reader of the first volume of *Modern Painters* has read the same book. Those who possess only one of the first two editions, or whose recollection of the book is derived from them, have sometimes been regretfully puzzled at the disappearance of favourite passages. It has seemed better in these cases—and it was also typographically more convenient—to print the original text *in extenso*, at the end of the several chapters. The most important case of this kind occurs in pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. Paragraphs §§ 6–47 (pp. 169–253) were added in the third edition, a few sentences only of the original text being incorporated. The original text (§§ 6–13) can here be read connectedly and *in extenso* (pp. 253–258). Opinions may differ as to whether the author's revision was in this case an improvement; but at any rate his first thoughts—such a passage, for instance, as the characterization of David Cox, whose pencil never fell but in dew (p. 253), or the longer one describing successive impressions of Venice (pp. 255–257)—are intensely characteristic, and are too important to every appreciative reader, to be pieced together from footnotes. Other chapters which were largely rewritten, and of which, therefore, the original version is here printed consecutively, are pt. ii. sec. ii. ch. iii. (see pp. 316–318), and pt. ii. sec. v. ch. i. (pp. 520–527).

The *manuscripts*, etc., of this volume to which the editors have had access are of two kinds:—(1) The two printed copies above referred to, containing Ruskin's notes and excisions; (2) MS. of the drafts of portions of volume one. An account of these MSS., with extracts, is given in Appendix v.; and passages from the author's draft are occasionally cited or referred to in notes upon the text. But a few general remarks may here be made. Ruskin in *Præterita* describes his literary work, at the time of the early volumes of *Modern Painters*, as having been "always done as quietly and methodically as a piece of tapestry. I knew exactly," he says, "what I had got to say, put the words firmly in their places like so many stitches, hemmed the edges of chapter round with what seemed to me graceful flourishes, touched them

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finally with my cunningest points of colour, and read the work to papa and mamma at breakfast next morning, as a girl shows her sampler."[1] Ruskin is here contrasting himself with Carlyle, and in the literary workshop at Denmark Hill there was, it is true, nothing of those wrestlings and objurgations with which Carlyle tortured refractory matter into shape. But it must not be supposed that Ruskin's stitches never went wrong, or that his chapters came full-born as they now stand from his brain and pen. A description which he gives elsewhere accords more nearly with the actual state of things as shown by his MSS. "A sentence of *Modern Painters*," he says, "was often written four or five times over in my own hand, and tried in every word for perhaps an hour—perhaps a forenoon—before it was passed for the printer."[2] So far as the arrangement of the matter went, he wrote and re-wrote and re-wrote again; and there are pages also in which hardly a word was not altered at least once. Of the final drudgery of correcting the proofs for the press, Ruskin was, it should be added, relieved in large measure by the good offices of W. H. Harrison. In writing a notice of his "old literary master," many years afterwards, Ruskin confessed to some "instinctive terror lest, wherever he is in celestial circles, he should catch me writing bad grammar, or putting wrong stops, and should set the table turning, or the like. For he was inexorable in such matters, and many a sentence in *Modern Painters*, which I had thought quite beautifully turned out after a forenoon's work on it, had to be turned outside-in, after all, and cut into the smallest pieces and sewn up again, because he had found there wasn't a nominative in it, or a genitive, or a conjunction, or something else indispensable to a sentence's decent existence and position in life. Not a book of mine, for good thirty years, but went, every word of it, under his careful eyes twice over — often also the last revises left to his tender mercies altogether, on condition he wouldn't bother me any more."[3] Ruskin's description of his composition as patch-work is in one respect curiously appropriate, so far as the manual labour was concerned; for he was in the habit of using wafers or sealing-wax to paste second versions of sentences over the first—thus literally dove-tailing

[1] *Præterita*, ii. ch. vii. § 135.

[2] *Fiction Fair and Foul*, § 123.

[3] *On the Old Road*, § 1. In a letter to W. H. Harrison, written shortly after the appearance of the 3rd ed. of vol. i. of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin says:—

> "There is only one mistake of the *sense* of a word in the whole book—classification for classicality; and, as far as I have yet seen, only one *literal* mistake—Prosperine for Proserpine. No book could possibly be edited more accurately; the punctuation is sometimes deficient in the way of commas, but that was entirely my own fault."

The mistakes in question occurred in passages on pp. 230, 242 of this edition.

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them in. His favourite MS. material was blue or white foolscap, ruled. There were often at least three stages in the composition (though this remark applies more particularly to later volumes). First, a draft in his hand in a note-book, often heavily corrected. Secondly, a fairer copy, also in his hand, on loose foolscap sheets, again corrected. Thirdly, a copy of the last, written out by an amanuensis,[1] and then once more copiously revised by the author.

The *frontispiece* to this volume is reproduced directly from the water-colour portrait by George Richmond, R.A. The portrait, which is at Brantwood, was painted for Ruskin's father, and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1843.[2] "A charming water-colour," Ruskin called it, "of me sitting at a picturesque desk in the open air, in a crimson waistcoat and white trousers, with a magnificent port-crayon in my hand, and Mont Blanc, conventionalized to Raphaelesque grace, in the distance."[3] Richmond painted it in February 1843, as the following extract from Ruskin's diary shows:—

> *February 24.*—In at Richmond's, and had a pleasant sitting. He says my chief aim in art is—infinity, which I think a clever guess, if it be a guess.

The other *illustrations* in this volume are from (1) drawings by Ruskin, or (2) drawings or pictures by Turner. Ten of the plates have been made expressly for this edition; four, though not hitherto published, were made during Ruskin's lifetime and on his instructions. Just as he had various schemes for rearranging and republishing the text of *Modern Painters*, so also he formed various plans for the further illustration of that and other works. He had a considerable number of drawings engraved under his personal superintendence at various times, which he designed for use in this way. Among the number are several steel-plates which he entrusted to Mr. George Allen. Of these some appear to have been intended for use in *Modern Painters*,[4] which book they serve, at any rate, to illustrate; they are therefore included in this edition. Four are inserted in the present volume; namely (*a*), a drawing by Ruskin of the Aiguille du Dru and the Valley of Chamouni (No. 7).

[1] In earlier years "George" (for whom see Introduction to next volume); later, Crawley and Baxter (whose acquaintance we shall make in subsequent volumes).
[2] No. 1061, described in the Catalogue as "John Rusken (*sic*), jun., Esq."
[3] *Præterita*, ii. ch. ix. § 169.
[4] They may have been intended for the separate publication of plates of which he speaks in the preface to *In Montibus Sanctis* (see Appendix v., p. 679).

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This is one of many studies of "Aiguilles and their Friends" made in 1842 or 1844 (*cf.* above, p. xxvii.). (*b*) A study of ivy and other foreground foliage (No. 6), and (*c*) a study of leafage and boughs (No. 13)—samples of many sketches of a similar kind made by Ruskin in the same years and throughout his life. The extracts from his diary, given below, may refer to these drawings.[1] (*d*) A drawing by Ruskin of a portion of the foreground in Turner's drawing entitled "The Longships Lighthouse, Land's End" (No. 10). The drawing is frequently referred to in this volume (see note on p. 404); it is reproduced in vol. ii. (p. 220) of *Turner and Ruskin.* Ruskin's study, here given, shows a portion of the wreckage which occupies the middle foreground of the drawing. Three of these plates, (*a*), (*b*), and (*d*), were engraved for Ruskin by J. C. Armytage, to whose skill a tribute was paid in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (author's preface, § 6 *n.*). The other, (*c*), was drawn and etched by Ruskin himself.

Three other drawings by Ruskin, reproduced by photogravure in this volume, illustrate various passages in it, and continue also the illustration of his handiwork given in the preceding volumes of this edition. The "San Michele, Lucca" (No. 1) is from a water-colour drawing made by Ruskin on the spot in 1845, as described below (p. 206 *n.*). The original is in the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford (see *Catalogue of the Educational Series*, No. 83). The "Casa Contarini Fasan, Venice" (No. 2) is from a pencil drawing (touched with sepia) made in 1841, and shows Ruskin's careful study of architectural detail (see p. 210 below). The original is also in the Drawing School (see *Catalogue of the Reference Series*, No. 65). It was exhibited at the Fine Art Society's Gallery in 1878 (see Ruskin's *Notes on his own Drawings*, 13 R.). The other Ruskin drawing here reproduced is of "Chamouni" (No. 4). It is referred to in *Præterita* (ii. ch. i. § 10), where Ruskin calls it "Chamouni in afternoon sunshine." It was made for his old tutor and friend, Osborne Gordon; the original water-colour ($11\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$) is now in possession of Mr. Pritchard Gordon, by whose kind permission it is here included.

The other illustrations in the volume are photogravures from pictures and drawings by Turner, described or referred to in the text. In selecting these, it has been thought unnecessary to include works which are accessible in public galleries, or are familiar from engravings in widely distributed publications. The works here reproduced

[1] *Dec.* 8, 1843.—Had a long, very long walk, nearly to Bromley,—studying boughs of trees, ivy-leaves on roots, etc. *Dec.* 11.—Drew a little; touched vignette from Armytage of leaves.

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are all in private collections (except No. 12, which is in a public gallery in America).

The "Valley of Chamouni" (No. 3) is reproduced (by kind permission of Mr. F. H. Fawkes) from the drawing at Farnley. It is referred to by Ruskin in this volume at p. 239 *n*. A rough sketch of the same subject is in the National Gallery collection (No. 554), made from nature in 1803. It is interesting to compare Turner's drawing with Ruskin's of a very similar subject (No. 4). This is the earliest of the works of Turner here illustrated; the Swiss series at Farnley belong to about 1810 (see note on p. 239).

The "Okehampton" (No. 9) is from the drawing of 1826, formerly in the Ruskin collection. It is frequently referred to in the following pages (see pp. 235, 266 *n*., 410, 421, 594).

The "Port Ruysdael" (No. 11) is from the painting of 1827, which Ruskin saw and described when it was in the Bicknell collection (see p. 568).

The "Llanthony Abbey" (No. 8) is from the drawing of 1834, formerly in Ruskin's collection. It is often referred to (see p. 401 *n*.).

The "Mercury and Argus" (No. 14) is of special interest in this volume, because the picture is one of those exhibited in 1836, which first inspired Ruskin to enter the lists as the champion of Turner's later manner.

The "Slaver" (No. 12) is also of particular interest in connection with *Modern Painters*. The picture, exhibited in 1840, was enthusiastically described in the first volume (see pp. 571–572); and it shortly afterwards became Ruskin's property, being given to him by his father in gratitude for the success which the book had obtained. "Its success was assured," says Ruskin, "by the end of the year [1843], and on January 1st, 1844, my father brought me in the 'Slaver' for a New Year's gift,—knowing well this time how to please me" (*Præterita*, ii. ch. iv. § 81). "I write," he notes in his diary (January 1, 1844), "with the 'Slaver' on my bed opposite me—my father brought it in this morning for a New Year's present. I feel very grateful. I hope I shall continue so. I certainly shall never want another oil of his. We had a fine washing at it, and got it into beautiful condition, as fresh as can be." In 1869 Ruskin sold the picture (for £2042, 5s.); the subject—the throwing overboard of the dead and dying, who are seen struggling in the water surrounded by sharks and gulls—had, he used to say, become too painful to live with.

The "Venice, Dogana and the Salute" (No. 5) is from the picture of 1843—one of the later Venices by Turner, which Ruskin greatly admired (see p. 250).

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The *facsimiles* of Ruskin's manuscript here given are from the "Allen (now Pierpont Morgan) MS.," described in Appendix v. (p. 682). The first (p. 89) is a rough draft of a well-known passage, the description of Landseer's "Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner"; the second (p. 256), of a passage which does not appear in the final text. The first four lines of it stood in the first edition; the rest, a characterisation of Prout, was re-written for that edition (see p. 216).

E. T. C.

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Bibliographical Note.—The bibliography of *Modern Painters* falls under three heads, dealing respectively with (1) editions of separate volumes; (2) editions of the whole work; (3) selections from it. The separate editions of the other volumes will be dealt with in each of them.

SEPARATE EDITIONS OF VOLUME I

VOLUME I.—*First Edition* (1843).—For title-page of this, see above, p. xxxi. Large crown 8vo, pp. xxxi. + 420. The title-page of this and all subsequent editions had the quotation from Wordsworth (as on the title-page here). On p. v. was the Dedication, "To the Landscape Artists of England." Issued (price 12s.) in green (or purple) cloth boards; lettered on the back with the words, "Modern Painters | Their Superiority | in | The Art of | Landscape Painting | to the | Ancient Masters"; this title was enclosed in the device (here reproduced) of two trees, a lake, and the setting sun, which figured in all subsequent editions of the book, up to and including that of 1873. The larger sized page and familiar pale green binding was not adopted until vol. ii. and the third edition of vol. i., both of which appeared in 1846. No illustrations.

Second Edition (1844).—Title-page identical with first edition, except that the date is altered, and the words "Second Edition" are added below the quotation.

The new preface (here pp. 7–52) caused the introductory matter to increase to pp. lxxxviii., and the revision of sec. vi. ch. iii. (see here, pp. 625–626) caused the other pages to number 423. Otherwise the revisions of the text were very slight. A slip, containing the following list of *Errata*, was inserted after the title-page:—

Page xxxiii., l. 8 from bottom, *for* ἐτιμῶν, *read* ἐτεμῶν.
,, xxxvii., l. 2, *for* Greeks, *read* Greek.
,, lx., l. 8, *for* neglected, *read* solitary.
,, 122, l. 9 from bottom, *for* us, *read* as.
,, 329, l. 6 from bottom, *for* water, *read* matter.

Issued in cloth boards, of dark slaty-blue colour.

Third Edition (1846).—This was issued soon after ed. 1 of vol. ii., and

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conformed to the larger page adopted for the latter—viz. Imperial 8vo (as in all later editions). The title-page was altered, thus :—

> Modern Painters. | Volume I. | Containing | Parts I. and II. | By a Graduate of Oxford. | [*Quotation*] | Third Edition | Revised by the Author | London : | Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill. | 1846.

pp. lxiii. + 422. New preface (here, pp. 52–53). The text was largely revised (see above, p. xlv.). Issued (Sept. 16, 1846) in pale green cloth boards. This and all later volumes were lettered simply, "Modern Painters, Volume I., II." etc. The price was raised to 18s. "Made-up sets," *i.e.* third eds. of vols. i. and ii., and first eds. of vols. iii., iv., and v., have in recent years been sold in the auction rooms at prices ranging, partly according to condition, from £31 (1887) to £15 (1902).

Fourth Edition (1848).—Except for the alteration of date and number of edition on the title-page, and omission of the *Preface to the Third Edition*, this edition was substantially identical with the last; variations in the text were few and unimportant.

Fifth Edition (1851).—This edition was the first to bear the author's name, though the authorship had already been publicly avowed, for *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, issued in 1849, was "by John Ruskin, author of *Modern Painters*." The title-page was :—

> Modern Painters. | Volume I. | Containing | Parts I. and II. | Of General Principles, and of Truth. | By John Ruskin, | Author of "The Stones of Venice," "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," | etc., etc. | [*Quotation*] | Fifth Edition, Revised by the Author. | London : | Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill. | 1851.

The text was again largely revised, and a Postscript on the death of Turner was added (here, p. 631). Issued in Sept. 1851.

Sixth Edition (1857).—The same as the Fifth, except for alteration of date and number of edition on the title-page.

Seventh Edition (1867).—The same as the Fifth, except for similar alterations, and for the addition on the title-page of the letters "M.A." after the author's name, and of these words at the foot: "The author reserves the right of translation."

This was the last separate edition of volume i. For bibliographical notes on separate editions of volumes ii. iii. iv. and v., see those volumes severally.

EDITIONS OF THE WHOLE WORK

New Edition (1873).—Generally known as the *Autograph Edition*, from the fact of the new preface (here, p. 54) being signed by the author. The title-pages were as follow :—

> Modern Painters. | Volume I. | Containing | Parts I. and II. | Of General Principles and of Truth. | By John Ruskin, LL.D. | Author of "The Stones of Venice," etc., etc. | [*Quotation*] | A New Edition | London : | Smith, Elder & Co., 15 Waterloo Place. | 1873. | [The Author reserves the right of translation.]

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Modern Painters. | Volume II. | Containing | Part III. | Sections I. and II. | Of the Imaginative and Theoretic Faculties. | By John Ruskin, LL.D. | etc., etc.

Modern Painters. | Volume III. | Containing | Part IV. | Of Many Things. | By John Ruskin, LL.D. | etc., etc.

Modern Painters. | Volume IV. | Containing | Part V. | Of Mountain Beauty. | By John Ruskin, LL.D. | etc., etc.

Modern Painters. | Volume V. | Completing the work, and containing | Parts | VI. Of Leaf Beauty. | VII. Of Cloud Beauty. | VIII. Of Ideas of Relation. | 1. Of Invention Formal. | IX. Of Ideas of Relation. | 2. Of Invention Spiritual. | By John Ruskin, LL.D. | etc., etc.

The collation is:—vol. i. pp. lxiii. + 423; vol. ii. pp. xvi. + 224; vol. iii. pp. xix. + 348; vol. iv. pp. xii. + 411; vol. v. pp. xvi. + 384. In volume i. of this edition is added a preface limiting the edition to a thousand copies, and signed by the author's own hand. Beyond this the work is a reprint without alteration from the last editions of the different volumes of the work. Issued (on June 26, 1873) in pale green cloth boards, similar to those of the previous editions of separate volumes. The published price of the five volumes was Eight Guineas. Sets have in recent years been sold in the auction rooms at prices ranging, partly according to condition, from £19 (1889) to £6, 12s. 6d. (1902).

To vol. ii. as to vol. i. there were no illustrations. Vol. iii. contained a frontispiece and 17 plates; vol. iv., a frontispiece and Plates 18–50; vol. v. a frontispiece and Plates 51–100. Several wood-cuts were also given in vols. iii. to v. Particulars of the illustrations are in this edition given in the Introductions and Bibliographical Notes to those volumes. The plates added in this edition to vols. i. and ii. are not numbered (on the plates) in order to preserve the author's numbering in the later volumes. In the "Autograph Edition" of 1873, all the illustrations were printed from the original plates.

That edition included at the end of vol. v. three indices to the whole work, first given in the separate issue of vol. v. (1860), viz. Local Index, Index to Painters and Pictures, and Topical Index.

Complete Edition (1888).[1] — This was the first edition published by Mr. George Allen, instead of by Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. With the exception of this alteration, of the altered date, and of "Complete Edition" for "A New Edition," the wording of the title-pages was the same as those of the 1873 edition, except (further) that the author was now described as "John Ruskin, LL.D., | Honorary Student of Christ Church, | and Honorary Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford" | . The title of each volume was enclosed within a plain ruled frame. The collation is:—vol. i. pp. lxiii. + 425; vol. ii. pp. xxvii. + 264; vol. iii. pp. xix. + 351; vol. iv. pp. xii. + 420; vol. v. pp. xvi. + 364. Each volume contained "Additional Notes" at the end, these being derived from *Frondes Agrestes* (see below), the rearranged edition of vol. ii. (see Bibliographical Note to next vol. of this edition), *In Montibus Sanctis* and *Cœli Enarrant* (see below). The fifth volume contained three additional plates (see Bibliographical Note to that vol.) and an Epilogue by the author dated "Chamouni, Sunday, September 16, 1888." Three of the original plates (Nos. 12, "The Shores of Wharfe," 73, "Loire Side," and 74, "The

[1] So dated on the title-page, but not issued till the following year.

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Millstream") had been destroyed. They were reproduced for this edition from early proofs of those originally etched by the author's own hand. Nine other plates were re-engraved, viz. :—

		Originally engraved by	*Re-engraved by*
Plate 14.	The Lombard Apennine	T. Lupton	G. Allen.
,, 15.	St. George of the Seaweed	,,	,,
,, 12A.[1]	The Shores of Wharfs	,,	,,
,, 49.	Truth and Untruth of Stones	,,	C. A. Tomkins.
,, 52.	Spirals of Thorn	R. P. Cuff	G. Cook.
,, 58.	Branch Curvature	,,	,,
,, 68.	Monte Rosa: Sunset	J. C. Armytage	,,
,, 80.	Rocks at Rest	,,	,,
,, 81.	Rocks in Unrest	,,	,,

Several of the original plates were retouched by Mr. George Allen or his son, Mr. Hugh Allen. The "Complete Edition" was in other respects a reprint of that of 1873, with no alterations of text, except in the case of wrong references or obvious errors. The prefaces and one or two other passages were divided into numbered sections for the sake of the references in the index volume (see below); the indices given at the end of vol. v. in the 1873 edition were not reprinted. The edition was issued (on May 9, 1889) in brown cloth boards. Two thousand copies were printed, the price being Six Guineas the set of five volumes; also 450 Large-Paper copies (on Whatman's hand-made paper) at Ten Guineas; these latter were issued (Jan. 31, 1889) in green cloth, the steel engravings being on India paper.

With this edition was issued an index volume (by Mr. A. Wedderburn). The following are extracts from the Prefatory Note :—

> "The present volume, though issued with Mr. Ruskin's sanction, has been compiled without reference to him, and he is, therefore, in no way responsible for it.
>
> "The references used in the index will be found equally applicable to all the editions of the different volumes of the work. The old index hitherto contained in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* is omitted from the 'Complete Edition,' but embodied in the present index, though not always under quite the same headings. . . .
>
> "A bibliography of *Modern Painters*, and a collation of the main differences between the various editions, are placed at the end of the volume, and will, it is believed, be valued by collectors and students of Mr. Ruskin's works."

The collation is pp. vii. + 316. The price of the volume was 14s.; and (uniform with the large-paper copies), 21s.

(An account of the "Complete Edition" of 1888, with various details supplied by Mr. George Allen, appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Feb. 1, 1889, and was reprinted in E. T. Cook's *Studies in Ruskin*, 1890, pp. 196–200.)

Second Complete Edition (1892).—This was a reprint of the foregoing; price Five (now Four) Guineas the set of five volumes; index volume, 14s. (now 10s.).

New Edition in small form (1897).—This was similar in all respects to the Complete Editions of 1888 and 1892, except that the size was crown 8vo, and that the plates were correspondingly reduced. The price of the five volumes

[1] The mezzotint in vol. iv. of Plate 12 in vol. iii.

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was 37s., and index volume, 5s. The volumes were, however, sold separately, and they were reprinted as required. Vols. i. and ii. (sold together) were reprinted in 1898, 1900, 1903; vol. iii., in 1898, 1901; vol. iv., in 1898, 1902; vol. v., in 1898, 1902; the index volume in 1898 (with some revision).

SELECTIONS FROM "MODERN PAINTERS"

Frondes Agrestes (1875).—This is the form in which passages from *Modern Painters* have been most widely issued from the press. The selection was made by Miss Susan Beever, as described in the letters printed under the title *Hortus Inclusus*. The title-page was:—

> Frondes Agrestes. | Readings in 'Modern Painters.' | Chosen at her pleasure, | by the Author's friend, | the younger Lady of the Thwaite, | Coniston. | "Spargit agrestes tibi silva frondes." | George Allen, | Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent, | 1875.

Post 8vo, pp. viii. + 184. The author's preface (here, p. 677) occupied pp. v.–vii. Page viii., blank at first, contained in some later issues a table of contents, etc., giving the divisions specified in the collation below. Thirty-four notes were added by the author; these were reprinted in the appendices to each volume of the "Complete Edition" of 1888, and of later editions reprinted from it. In this edition they are given as notes to the text. Issued (on April 28, 1875) in brown leather, price 3s. 6d. Some copies of the fifth and later editions were issued in cloth boards, with a white-paper label; later editions were also issued in green cloth, price 3s. The following are the dates of publication of successive editions:—1875, 1876, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1883, 1884, 1886, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1893, 1895 (two), 1896, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1902. In all, 36,000 copies of these selections have been printed.

No alteration has been made in the text of any of the editions.

The following table gives the references to the passages contained in *Frondes Agrestes*, an asterisk denoting those to which notes were added by the author. The references are (in the second column) to the volumes (i.–v.), and (in the third column) to the parts (in the case of vols. i. and v., which alone contain more than one part), sections, chapters, and paragraphs of *Modern Painters*:—

Section I.—Principles of Art		
1.	I.	i. i. 6. 1, 2.
2.	II.	i. 3. 9.
3.	II.	i. 1. 8.
4.*	II.	i. 3. 13.
5.*	III.	7. 16.
6.*	III.	5. 6.
7.*	III.	7. 15.
8.*	III.	4. 22.
Section II.—Power and Office of Imagination		
9.*	III.	4. 5.
10.*	III.	2. 7.
11.	III.	16. 24.
12.*	III.	7. 19, 20.
13.*	III.	16. 28, 29.
14.*	II.	ii. 3. 33.
15.	III.	7. 8.
16.	III.	17. 3.
17.	III.	10. 8.
18.*	IV.	11. 8, 9.
19.*	IV.	20. 2.
20.*	IV.	1. 2, 3.
Section III.—Illustrative: The Sky		
21.*	I.	iii. 1. 1, 2, 3.
22.*	V.	4. 6.
23.	I.	ii. iii. 1. 13.
24.*	V.	vii. 1. 2, 3, 9.
	IV.	v. 5. 2–5.
25.*	I.	ii. iii. 4. 31–4.
26.*	IV.	6. 2–9.
Section IV.—Illustrative: Streams and Sea		
27.	I.	ii. v. 1. 1.
28.	V.	vii. 4. 5.
29.*	I.	ii. v. 2. 3.
30.*	IV.	12. 1, 2, 3.
31.*	I.	ii. v. 3. 38.

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SECTION V.—ILLUSTRATIVE: MOUNTAINS

32.*	IV.	7 except 5, and 1st par.; and 2nd par. of 9.
33.	I.	ii. iv. 1. 3.
34.**	IV.	9. 6.
35.*	IV.	13. 11–14.
36.*	IV.	10. 4, 5.
37.	IV.	16. 16, 17.

SECTION VI.—ILLUSTRATIVE: STONES

38.	IV.	18. 6, 7.
39.	IV.	17. 37–8.
40.	III.	9. 6.
41.	IV.	11. 6.
42.	IV.	11. 2.
43.	IV.	10. 3.
44.	IV.	18. 26.

SECTION VII.—ILLUSTRATIVE: PLANTS AND FLOWERS

45.	V.	vi. 1. 3.
46.	V.	vi. 8. 20.
47.*	V.	vi. 9. 7–9.
48.	V.	vi. 9. 15–16.
49.	I.	ii. ii. 2. 2.
50.	V.	vi. 10. 7.
51.	V.	vi. 10. 2, 3.
52.	IV.	3. 16.
53.	V.	vii. 1. 7.
54.*	I.	ii. iv. 2. 19.
	II.	iii. i. 12. 1.
55.	II.	iii. i. 13. 10, 11.
56.	V.	10. 18.
57.	III.	14. 51, 53.
58.	V.	vi. 10. 22.
59.	V.	vi. 10. 24.
60.	V.	vi. 10. 25.

SECTION VIII.—EDUCATION

61.	V.	ix. 11. 20, 21.
62.	III.	17. 32.
63.*	III.	17. 34.
64.	III.	17. 24.
65.	V.	ix. 11. 22.
66.	V.	ix. 11. 15.
67.	III.	17. 13.
68.	III.	17. 35.
69.	III.	1. 2.
70.	III.	18. 32.
71.	I.	ii. i. 7. 8.
72.*	II.	i. 6. 2.
73.*	II.	i. 12. 2.
74.*	II.	i. 12. 2.
75.	IV.	18. 5.

SECTION IX.—MORALITIES

76.*	V.	vii. 4. 22.
77.	III.	4. 16.
78.	II.	i. 14. 27.
79.	II.	i. 15. 11.
80.	II.	i. 14. 5.
81.	II.	i. 14. 9.
82.	II.	i. 14. 10.
83.	II.	i. 7. 1.
84.	I.	i. i. 1. 5.
85.	II.	i. 7. 7.
86.	IV.	19. 3, 4.
87.*	V.	ix. 2. 11.
88.	I.	i. pref. to 2nd edition.
89.	IV.	20. 18.
90.	IV.	20. 45–end.

In Montibus Sanctis (1884–85). For the origin and intention of this and the following series of selections, see above, p. xlix. The title-page was :—

> In Montibus Sanctis. | Studies of Mountain Form | and of its visible causes. | Collected and completed | out of | 'Modern Painters.' | By | John Ruskin, | Honorary Student of Christ Church, Honorary Fellow of Corpus Christi | College; and Slade Professor of Fine Art, Oxford. | Part I. | George Allen, | Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent. | 1884.

Small 4to, pp. vii.+40. Issued (on Oct. 1, 1884) in cream-coloured paper wrapper, with the title-page reproduced upon the front. Price 1s. 6d. 3000 copies printed. The Preface (pp. iii.–vii.) is here reprinted at p. 678. Part I. contained "Chapter I. Of the Distinctions of Form in Silica" (Read before the Mineralogical Society, July 24, 1884), and a "Postscript to Chapter I." These were not from *Modern Painters;* they are reprinted in a later volume of this edition.

"Part II., 1885" (title-page otherwise the same), pp. ii.+45, was issued on Feb. 8, 1885. Price 1s. 6d. 3000 copies printed. It contained "Chapter II. The Dry Land (*Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. vii.," "Postscript to Chapter II.," "Chapter III. Of the Materials of Mountains" (*Modern Painters*, pt. v., the

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beginning of ch. viii.), and "Postscript to Chapter III." The author added a few notes. These, with the above-mentioned postscripts, were reprinted in the successive issues of the "Complete Edition," and are in this edition incorporated in vol. iv. of *Modern Painters*.

No further Parts of *In Montibus Sanctis* were issued, and Parts I. and II. are still in the first edition.

Cœli Enarrant (1885). The title-page was as follows :—

> Cœli Enarrant. | Studies of Cloud Form | and of its visible causes. | Collected and completed | out of | 'Modern Painters.' | By | John Ruskin, | Honorary Student of Christ Church, Honorary Fellow of Corpus Christi | College, and Slade Professor of Fine Art, Oxford. | Part I. | 1885. | George Allen, Sunnyside, | Orpington, | Kent.

Small 4to, pp. viii. + 32. Issued on Feb. 1, 1885, in the same form, and at the same price, as the two parts of *In Montibus Sanctis*. It contained "Chapter I. The Firmament (*Modern Painters*, vol. iv. pt. v. ch. vi.)," and "Chapter II. The Cloud Balancings (*Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vii. ch. i.)." The author added a few notes. These, together with a portion of the preface, were reprinted in the successive issues of the "Complete Edition." In this edition, the notes and preface are incorporated in vols. iv. and v. of *Modern Painters*.

It will be observed that Ruskin expressly "reserved the right of translation." He was not always well disposed to the idea of foreign translations of his book (see a letter, in a later volume, of Jan. 25, 1888). Under the present head should, however, be noted a German translation: "*Moderne Maler*. Übersetzt von Charlotte Broicher und W. Schölermann, published by Eugen Diederichs in Leipzig, being vols. xi.–xv. of *John Ruskin: Gesammelte Werke*." Vols. i. and ii. of *Moderne Maler* appeared in 1902; vols. iii.–v. are announced (1903) as in preparation.

Unauthorised American editions of *Modern Painters* have been very numerous, and in various styles, from a "People's Edition" at two dollars, to an "Elegant 8vo Edition" at thirty dollars.

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MODERN PAINTERS

VOLUME I

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION[1]

[1843]

1. THE work now laid before the public originated in indignation at the shallow and false criticisms of the periodicals of the day on the works of the great living artist to whom it principally refers. It was intended to be a short pamphlet, reprobating the manner and style of those critiques, and pointing out their perilous tendency, as guides of public feeling. But, as point after point presented itself for demonstration, I found myself compelled to amplify what was at first a letter to the editor of a Review,[2] into something very like a treatise on art, to which I was obliged to give the more consistency and completeness, because it advocated opinions which, to the ordinary connoisseur, will sound heretical. I now scarcely know whether I should announce it as an Essay on Landscape Painting, and apologize for its frequent reference to the works of a particular master; or, announcing it as a critique on particular works, apologize for its lengthy discussion of general principles. But of whatever character the work may be considered, the motives which led me to undertake it must not be mistaken. No zeal for the reputation of any individual, no personal feeling of any kind, has the slightest weight or influence with me. The reputation of the great artist to whose works I have chiefly referred, is established on

[1] [Retained in all subsequent editions of the book. The numbering of the paragraphs was first introduced in the ed. of 1888.]

[2] [*Cf.* the letter to Osborne Gordon in Appendix iii., p. 666. The reference here is not so much to the "Reply to *Blackwood*," written in 1836 (see Appendix i.), as to the hostile criticisms, in the press, of Turner's pictures in 1842: see above, Introduction, p. xxiv.]

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too legitimate grounds among all whose admiration is honourable, to be in any way affected by the ignorant sarcasms of pretension and affectation. But when *public* taste seems plunging deeper and deeper into degradation day by day, and when the press universally exerts such power as it possesses to direct the feeling of the nation more completely to all that is theatrical, affected, and false in art; while it vents its ribaldry on the most exalted truth, and the highest ideal of landscape that this or any other age has ever witnessed, it becomes the imperative duty of all who have any perception or knowledge of what is really great in art, and any desire for its advancement in England, to come fearlessly forward, regardless of such individual interests as are likely to be injured by the knowledge of what is good and right, to declare and demonstrate, wherever they exist, the essence and the authority of the Beautiful and the True.

2. Whatever may seem invidious or partial in the execution of my task is dependent not so much on the tenour of the work, as on its incompleteness. I have not entered into systematic criticism of all the painters of the present day; but I have illustrated each particular excellence and truth of art by the works in which it exists in the highest degree, resting satisfied that if it be once rightly felt and enjoyed in these, it will be discovered and appreciated wherever it exists in others. And although I have never suppressed any conviction of the superiority of one artist over another, which I believed to be grounded on truth, and necessary to the understanding of truth, I have been cautious never to undermine positive rank, while I disputed relative rank. My uniform desire and aim have been, not that the present favourite should be admired less, but that the neglected master should be admired more. And I know that an increased perception and sense of truth and beauty, though it may interfere with our estimate of the comparative rank of painters, will invariably tend to increase our admiration of all who are really great; and he who now places Stanfield and

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Callcott above Turner, will admire Stanfield and Callcott more than he does now, when he has learned to place Turner far above them both.

3. In three instances only have I spoken in direct depreciation of the works of living artists,[1] and these are all cases in which the reputation is so firm and extended, as to suffer little injury from the opinion of an individual, and where the blame has been warranted and deserved by the desecration of the highest powers.

Of the old masters I have spoken with far greater freedom; but let it be remembered that only a portion of the work is now presented to the public, and it must not be supposed, because in that particular portion, and with reference to particular excellences, I have spoken in constant depreciation, that I have no feeling of other excellences of which cognizance can only be taken in future parts of the work. Let me not be understood to mean more than I have said, nor be made responsible for conclusions when I have only stated facts. I have said that the old masters did not give the truth of nature; if the reader chooses, thence, to infer that they were not masters at all, it is his conclusion, not mine.

4. Whatever I have asserted throughout the work, I have endeavoured to ground altogether on demonstrations which must stand or fall by their own strength, and which ought to involve no more reference to authority or character than a demonstration in Euclid. Yet it is proper for the public to know that the writer is no mere theorist, but has been devoted from his youth to the laborious study of practical art.

Whatever has been generally affirmed of the old schools of landscape painting is founded on familiar acquaintance with

[1] [As this passage occurred in ed. 1, it must refer to criticisms contained therein. Presumably, therefore, the reference is to (1) Maclise; see pp. 82, 619. The latter reference occurred only in eds. 1 and 2; in ed. 2 there was a further reference, in pref. § 45 *n.* (2) Holland; see p. 529. (3) A painter unnamed; see p. 126. If we were to include references introduced in the second and later editions, we should have to add Martin (pp. 36, 38), Cattermole (pp. 220, 461), and Pyne (p. 479).]

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every important work of art, from Antwerp to Naples.[1] But it would be useless, where close and immediate comparison with works in our own Academy is desirable, to refer to the details of pictures at Rome or Munich; and it would be impossible to speak at once with just feeling, as regarded the possessor, and just freedom, as regarded the public, of pictures in private galleries. Whatever particular references have been made for illustration have been therefore confined, as far as was in my power, to works in the National and Dulwich Galleries.[2]

5. Finally, I have to apologize for the imperfection of a work which I could have wished not to have executed but with years of reflection and revisal. It is owing to my sense of the necessity of such revisal, that only a portion of the work is now presented to the public; but that portion is both complete in itself, and is more peculiarly directed against the crying evil which called for instant remedy. Whether I ever completely fulfil my intention will partly depend upon the spirit in which the present volume is received. If it be attributed to an invidious spirit, or a desire for the advancement of individual interests, I could hope to effect little good by farther effort. If, on the contrary, its real feeling and intention be understood, I shall shrink from no labour in the execution of a task which may tend, however feebly, to the advancement of the cause of real art in England, and to the honour of those great living Masters whom we now neglect or malign, to pour our flattery into the ear of Death, and exalt, with vain acclamation, the names of those who neither demand our praise, nor regard our gratitude.

THE AUTHOR.

[1] [See above, Introduction, p. xx.; and for further illustration of the notes on pictures in Ruskin's diaries, see *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. v. § 5.]

[2] [The pictures in the Dulwich Gallery have since 1892 been renumbered. In notes to the following pages the new numbers are supplied.]

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION[1]

[1844]

1. It is allowed by the most able writers on naval and military tactics, that although the attack by successive divisions absolutely requires in the attacking party such an inherent superiority, in quality of force, and such consciousness of that superiority, as may enable his front columns, or his leading ships, to support themselves for a considerable period against overwhelming numbers; it yet insures, if maintained with constancy, the most total ruin of the opposing force. Convinced of the truth, and therefore assured of the ultimate prevalence and victory of the principles which I have advocated, and equally confident that the strength of the cause must give weight to the strokes of even the weakest of its defenders, I permitted myself to yield to a somewhat hasty and hot-headed desire of being, at whatever risk, in the thick of the fire, and began the contest with a part, and that the weakest and least considerable part, of the forces at my disposal. And I now find the volume thus boldly laid before the public in a position much resembling that of the *Royal Sovereign* at Trafalgar, receiving, unsupported, the broadsides of half the enemy's fleet; while unforeseen circumstances have hitherto prevented, and must yet for a time prevent, my heavier ships of the line from taking any part in the action. I watched the first moments of the struggle with some anxiety for the solitary vessel, an anxiety which I have now ceased to feel; for the flag of truth waves brightly through the smoke of the battle, and my antagonists, wholly intent on the destruction of the

[1] [Retained in all subsequent editions of the book. The numbering of the paragraphs was first introduced in the ed. of 1888.]

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leading ship, have lost their position, and exposed themselves in defenceless disorder to the attack of the following columns.

2. If, however, I have had no reason to regret my hasty advance, as far as regards the ultimate issue of the struggle, I have yet found it to occasion much misconception of the character, and some diminution of the influence, of the present Essay. For though the work has been received as only in sanguine moments I had ventured to hope,[1] though I have had the pleasure of knowing that in many instances its principles have carried with them a strength of conviction amounting to a demonstration of their truth, and that, even where it has had no other influence, it has excited interest, suggested inquiry, and prompted to a just and frank comparison of art with nature; yet this effect would have been greater still, had not the work been supposed, as it seems to have been by many readers, a completed treatise, containing a systematized statement of the whole of my views on the subject of modern art. Considered as such, it surprises me that the book should have received the slightest attention. For what respect could be due to a writer who pretended to criticise and classify the works of the great painters of landscape, without developing, or even alluding to, one single principle of the beautiful or sublime? So far from being a completed essay, it is little more than the introduction to the mass of evidence and illustration which I have yet to bring forward; it treats of nothing but the initiatory steps of art, states nothing but the elementary rules of criticism, touches only on merits attainable by accuracy of eye and fidelity of hand, and leaves for future consideration every one of the eclectic qualities of pictures, all of good that is prompted by feeling, and of great that is guided by judgment; and its function and scope should the less have been mistaken, because I have not only most carefully arranged the subject in its commencement, but have given frequent references throughout to the essays by which it is intended to be succeeded, in which I shall endeavour to

[1] [For criticisms of vol. i. on its first appearance, see above, Introduction, pp. xxxv.–xxxvii., xliii.]

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point out the signification and the value of those phenomena of external nature which I have been hitherto compelled to describe without reference either to their inherent beauty, or to the lessons which may be derived from them.

3. Yet, to prevent such misconception in future, I may perhaps be excused for occupying the reader's time with a fuller statement of the feelings with which the work was undertaken, of its general plan and of the conclusions and positions which I hope to be able finally to deduce and maintain.

Nothing, perhaps, bears on the face of it more appearance of folly, ignorance, and impertinence, than any attempt to diminish the honour of those to whom the assent of many generations has assigned a throne; for the truly great of later times have, almost without exception, fostered in others the veneration of departed power which they felt themselves; satisfied in all humility to take their seat at the feet of those whose honour is brightened by the hoariness of time, and to wait for the period when the lustre of many departed days may accumulate on their own heads, in the radiance which culminates as it recedes. The envious and incompetent have usually been the leaders of attack, content if, like the foulness of the earth, they may attract to themselves notice by their noisomeness, or, like its insects, exalt themselves by virulence into visibility. While, however, the envy of the vicious, and the insolence of the ignorant, are occasionally shown in their nakedness by *futile* efforts to degrade the dead, it is worthy of consideration whether they may not more frequently escape detection in *successful* efforts to degrade the living; whether the very same malice may not be gratified, the very same incompetence demonstrated, in the unjust lowering of present greatness, and the unjust exaltation of a perished power, as, if exerted and manifested in a less safe direction, would have classed the critic with Nero and Caligula, with Zoilus and Perrault.[1] Be it remembered, that the spirit of detraction is

[1] [For Zoilus, see the "Reply to *Blackwood*," below, p. 638. Charles Perrault (1628–1703), French Academician, author of the *Parullèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, which set on foot the famous literary quarrel of ancients and moderns, summarised in Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, vol. iv. pt. iv. ch. vii.]

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detected only when unsuccessful, and receives least punishment where it effects the greatest injury; and it cannot but be felt that there is as much danger that the rising of new stars should be concealed by the mists which are unseen, as that those throned in heaven should be darkened by the clouds which are visible.

4. There is, I fear, so much malice in the hearts of most men, that they are chiefly jealous of that praise which can give the greatest pleasure, and are then most liberal of eulogium when it can no longer be enjoyed. They grudge not the whiteness of the sepulchre, because by no honour they can bestow upon it can the senseless corpse be rendered an object of envy; but they are niggardly of the reputation which contributes to happiness, or advances to fortune.[1] They are glad to obtain credit for generosity and humility by exalting those who are beyond the reach of praise, and thus to escape the more painful necessity of doing homage to a living rival. They are rejoiced to set up a standard of imaginary excellence, which may enable them, by insisting on the inferiority of a contemporary work to the things that have been, to withdraw the attention from its superiority to the things that are. The same undercurrent of jealousy operates in our reception of animadversion. Men have commonly more pleasure in the criticism which hurts than in that which is innocuous; and are more tolerant of the severity which breaks hearts and ruins fortunes, than of that which falls impotently on the grave.

5. And thus well says the good and deep-minded Richard Hooker:[2] "To the best and wisest, while they live, the world is continually a froward opposite; and a curious observer of their defects and imperfections, their virtues afterwards it as much admireth. And for this cause, many times that which deserveth admiration would hardly be able to find favour, if

[1] [The tragedy of vindications that come too late—of building memorials only to the dead—was a recurrent theme with Ruskin throughout his books. See, *e.g.*, in this vol., ch. i. § 5; and in *Modern Painters*, vol. iv., Appendix i.; vol. v. pt. vi. ch. viii. § 20. And *cf. A Joy for Ever*, § 70; *Fors Clavigera*, Letter xvi.]

[2] [Ruskin had at this time been reading with care—by the advice of his old tutor, Osborne Gordon—Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity;* for its influence on his style, see *Præterita*, ii. ch. x. § 184, and *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. Addenda *n.*].

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they which propose it were not content to profess themselves therein scholars and followers of the ancient. For the world will not endure to hear that we are wiser than any have been which went before."—Book v. ch. vii. 8. He therefore who would maintain the cause of contemporary excellence against that of elder time, must have almost every class of men arrayed against him. The generous, because they would not find matter of accusation against established dignities; the envious, because they like not the sound of a living man's praise; the wise, because they prefer the opinion of centuries to that of days; and the foolish, because they are incapable of forming an opinion of their own. Obloquy so universal is not likely to be risked, and the few who make an effort to stem the torrent, as it is made commonly in favour of their own works, deserve the contempt which is their only reward. Nor is this to be regretted, in its influence on the progress and preservation of things technical and communicable. Respect for the ancients is the salvation of art, though it sometimes blinds us to its *ends*. It increases the power of the painter, though it diminishes his liberty; and if it be sometimes an incumbrance to the essays of invention, it is oftener a protection from the consequences of audacity. The whole system and discipline of art, the collected results of the experience of ages, might, but for the fixed authority of antiquity, be swept away by the rage of fashion, or lost in the glare of novelty; and the knowledge which it had taken centuries to accumulate, the principles which mighty minds had arrived at only in dying, might be overthrown by the frenzy of a faction, and abandoned in the insolence of an hour.

6. Neither, in its general application, is the persuasion of the superiority of former works less just than useful. The greater number of them are, and must be, immeasurably nobler than any of the results of present effort, because that which is the best of the productions of four thousand years must necessarily be, in its accumulation, beyond all rivalry from the works of any given generation; but it should always be remembered that it is improbable that many, and impossible

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that all, of such works, though the greatest yet produced, should approach abstract perfection; that there is certainly something left for us to carry farther, or complete; that any given generation has just the same chance of producing some individual mind of first-rate calibre, as any of its predecessors; and that if such a mind *should* arise, the chances are, that, with the assistance of experience and example, it would, in its particular and chosen path, do greater things than had been before done.

7. We must therefore be cautious not to lose sight of the real use of what has been left us by antiquity, nor to take that for a model of perfection which is, in many cases, only a guide to it. The picture which is looked to for an interpretation of nature is invaluable, but the picture which is taken as a substitute for nature had better be burned: and the young artist, while he should shrink with horror from the iconoclast who would tear from him every landmark and light which have been bequeathed him by the ancients, and leave him in a liberated childhood, may be equally certain of being betrayed by those who would give him the power and the knowledge of past time, and then fetter his strength from all advance, and bend his eyes backward on a beaten path; who would thrust canvas between him and the sky, and tradition between him and God.

8. And such conventional teaching is the more to be dreaded, because all that is highest in art, all that is creative and imaginative, is formed and created by every great master for himself, and cannot be repeated or imitated by others. We judge of the excellence of a rising writer, not so much by the resemblance of his works to what has been done before, as by their difference from it; and while we advise him, in his first trials of strength, to set certain models before him with respect to inferior points,—one for versification, another for arrangement, another for treatment,—we yet admit not his greatness until he has broken away from all his models, and struck forth versification, arrangement, and treatment of his own.

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9. Three points, therefore, I would especially insist upon as necessary to be kept in mind in all criticism of modern art. First, that there are few, very few, of even the best productions of antiquity, which are not visibly and palpably imperfect in some kind or way, and conceivably improvable by farther study; that every nation, perhaps every generation, has in all probability some peculiar gift, some particular character of mind, enabling it to do something different from, or something in some sort better than, what has been before done; and that therefore, unless art be a trick or a manufacture of which the secrets are lost, the greatest minds of existing nations, if exerted with the same industry, passion, and honest aim as those of past time, have a chance in their particular walk of doing something as great, or, taking the advantage of former example into account, even greater and better. It is difficult to conceive by what laws of logic some of the reviewers of the following Essay have construed its first sentence into a denial of this principle, a denial such as their own conventional and shallow criticism of modern works invariably implies. I have said that "nothing has been for centuries consecrated by public admiration without possessing in a *high* degree *some* species of sterling excellence."[1] Does it thence follow that it possesses in the *highest* degree *every* species of sterling excellence? "Yet thus," says the sapient reviewer, "he admits the fact against which he mainly argues, namely, the superiority of these time-honoured productions." As if the possession of an abstract excellence of some kind necessarily implied the possession of an incomparable excellence of every kind. There are few works of man so perfect as to admit of no conception of their being excelled;[2] there are thousands which have been for centuries, and will be for centuries more, consecrated by public admiration, which are

[1] [The opening words of ch. i., below, p. 79.]

[2] [Eds. 2, 3, and 4 here gave the following footnote :—

"One or two fragments of Greek sculpture, the works of Michael Angelo, considered with reference to their general conception and power, and the Madonna di St. Sisto, are all that I should myself put into such a category; not that even these are without defect, but their defects are such as mortality could never hope to rectify."]

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yet imperfect in many respects, and have been excelled, and may be excelled again. Do my opponents mean to assert that nothing good can ever be bettered, and that what is best of past time is necessarily best of all time? Perugino, I suppose, possessed some species of sterling excellence, but Perugino was excelled by Raffaelle; and so Claude possesses some species of sterling excellence, but it follows not that he may not be excelled by Turner.

10. The second point on which I would insist is, that if a mind *were* to arise of such power as to be capable of equalling or excelling some of the greater works of past ages, the productions of such a mind would, in all probability, be totally different in manner and matter from all former productions; for the more powerful the intellect, the less will its works resemble those of other men, whether predecessors or contemporaries. Instead of reasoning, therefore, as we commonly do, in matters of art, that because such and such a work does not resemble that which has hitherto been a canon, therefore it *must* be inferior and wrong in principle; let us rather admit that there is in its very dissimilarity an increased chance of its being itself a new, and perhaps a higher, canon. If any production of modern art can be shown to have the authority of nature on its side, and to be based on eternal truths, it is all so much more in its favour, so much farther proof of its power, that it is totally different from all that have been before seen.*

* This principle is dangerous, but not the less true, and necessary to be kept in mind. There is scarcely any truth which does not admit of being wrested to purposes of evil; and we must not deny the desirableness of originality, because men may err in seeking for it, or because a pretence to it may be made, by presumption, a cloak for its incompetence. Nevertheless, originality is never to be sought for its own sake, otherwise it will be mere aberration; it should arise naturally out of hard, independent study of nature: and it should be remembered that in many things technical it is impossible to alter without being inferior, for therein, says Spenser, "Truth is one, and right is ever one;" but wrongs are various and multitudinous.[1]

[1] [Eds. 2 and 3 add, "'Vice,' says Byron, in *Marino Faliero*, 'must have variety; but Virtue stands like the sun, and all which rolls around drinks life from her aspect'" (*Marino Faliero*, Act. ii. Sc. i.). The quotation from Spenser is from *The Faerie Queene*, book v. canto ii. v. 48. *Cf.* the line quoted in Aristotle's *Ethics*, ii. 5, 14, ἰσοθλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἁπλῶς, παντοδαπῶς δὲ κακοί.]

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11. The third point on which I would insist is, that, if such a mind were to arise, it would at once divide the world of criticism into two factions: the one, necessarily the larger and louder, composed of men incapable of judging except by precedent, ignorant of general truth, and acquainted only with such particular truths as may have been illustrated or pointed out to them by former works, which class would of course be violent in vituperation, and increase in animosity as the master departed farther from their particular and preconceived canons of right, thus wounding their vanity by impugning their judgment; the other, necessarily narrow of number, composed of men of general knowledge and unbiassed habits of thought, who would recognise in the work of the daring innovator a record and illustration of facts before unseized; who would justly and candidly estimate the value of the truths so rendered, and would increase in fervour of admiration as the master strode farther and deeper, and more daringly into dominions before unsearched or unknown; yet diminishing in multitude as they increased in enthusiasm. For by how much their leader became more impatient in his step, more impetuous in his success, more exalted in his research, by so much must the number capable of following him become narrower; until at last, supposing him never to pause in his advance, he might be left in the very culminating moment of his consummate achievement, with but a faithful few by his side, his former disciples fallen away, his former enemies doubled in numbers and virulence, and the evidence of his supremacy only to be wrought out by the devotion of men's lives to the earnest study of the new truths he had discovered and recorded.

12. Such a mind has arisen in our days. It has gone on from strength to strength, laying open fields of conquest peculiar to itself. It has occasioned such schism in the schools of criticism as was beforehand to be expected, and it is now at the zenith of its power, and, *consequently*, in the last phase of declining popularity.

This I know, and can prove. No man, says Southey, was

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ever yet convinced of any momentous truth, without feeling in himself the power as well as the desire of communicating it. In asserting and demonstrating the supremacy of this great master, I shall both do immediate service to the cause of right art, and shall be able to illustrate many principles of landscape painting, which are of general application, and have hitherto been unacknowledged.

For anything like immediate effect on the public mind I do not hope. "We mistake men's diseases," says Richard Baxter, "when we think there needeth nothing to cure them of their errors but the evidence of truth. Alas! there are many distempers of mind to be removed before they receive that evidence." Nevertheless, when it is fully laid before them my duty will be done. Conviction will follow in due time.

13. I do not consider myself as in any way addressing, or having to do with, the ordinary critics of the press. Their writings are not the guide, but the expression, of public opinion. A writer for a newspaper naturally and necessarily endeavours to meet, as nearly as he can, the feelings of the majority of his readers; his bread depends on his doing so. Precluded by the nature of his occupations from gaining any knowledge of art, he is sure that he can gain credit for it by expressing the opinion of his readers. He mocks the picture which the public pass, and bespatters with praise the canvas which a crowd concealed from him.[1]

Writers like the present critic of *Blackwood's Magazine** deserve more respect; the respect due to honest, hopeless,

* It is with regret that, in a work of this nature, I take notice of criticisms which, after all, are merely intended to amuse the careless reader, and be forgotten as soon as read; but I do so in compliance with wishes expressed to me since the publication of this work, by persons who have the interests of art deeply at heart, and who, I find, attach more importance to the matter than I should have been disposed to do. I have, therefore, marked two or three passages which may enable the public to judge for themselves of the quality of these critiques; and this I think a matter of justice to those who might

[1] [For other remarks on art criticism in the newspapers, see the last chapter of this volume, and *Academy Notes*, 1855 (Supplement).]

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helpless imbecility.[1] There is something exalted in the innocence of their feeble-mindedness: one cannot suspect them of partiality, for it implies feeling; nor of prejudice, for it implies some previous acquaintance with their subject. I do not know that, even in this age of charlatanry, I could point to a more barefaced instance of imposture on the simplicity of the public, than the insertion of those pieces of criticism in a respectable periodical. We are not so insulted with opinions on music from persons ignorant of its notes; nor with treatises on philology by persons unacquainted with the alphabet; but here is page after page of criticism, which one may read from end to end, looking for something which the writer knows, and finding nothing. Not his own language, for he has to look in his dictionary, by his own confession, for a word * occurring in one

otherwise have been led astray by them: more than this I cannot consent to do. I should have but a hound's office if I had to tear the tabard from every Rouge Sanglier of the arts, with bell and bauble to back him.[2]

* Chrysoprase. *Vide* No. for October, 1842, p. 502.[3]

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[1] [In addition to the review of *Modern Painters* in *Blackwood's Magazine* for Oct. 1843, Ruskin is referring to its critiques of the Annual Exhibitions for 1841 (Sept. 1841), 1842 (July 1842), and 1843 (Aug. 1843). For his "difficulty in being contemptuous enough," see above, Introduction, p. xliv. In the number for July 1842, the writer spoke thus of Turner's pictures, which, however, he added, showed some improvement:—

"Turner's eye must play him false; it cannot truly represent to his mind either his forms or colours—or his hallucination is great. There were a number of idolatrous admirers who, for a long time, could not see his exhibited absurdities; but as there is every year some one thing worse than ever, by degrees the lovers fall off, and now we scarcely find one to say a good word for him. . . . We would recommend the aspirant after Turner's style and fame to a few nightly exhibitions of the 'Dissolving Views' at the Polytechnic, and he can scarcely fail to obtain the secret of the whole method."

The reviewer's description of Turner's waning popularity corresponds, it will be observed, with the process traced by Ruskin at the end of § 11, above. It may be added that the reviewer's favourite in the exhibition of 1842 seemed to be Eastlake; that painter reminded him of Raphael.]

[2] [The reference is to Rouge Sanglier, the herald of William de la Marck: *Quentin Durward*, ch. xxxiii.]

[3] [The actual reference is to the No. for October 1843, where, in the review of *Modern Painters*, the critic quotes the description of the "Fall of Schaffhausen" (pt. ii. sec. v. ch. ii. § 2, p. 529), containing the phrase, "all the hollows of the foam burn with green fire like so much shattering chrysoprase." The reviewer's comment was: "Satque superque satis—we cannot go on. . . . Whenever you speak of water treat it as fire—of fire, *vice versa*, as water; and be sure to send them all shattering out of reach and discrimination of all sense; and look into a dictionary for some such word

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of the most important chapters in his Bible; not the commonest traditions of the schools, for he does not know why Poussin was called "learned;" * not the most simple canons of art, for he prefers Lee to Gainsborough; † not the most ordinary facts

* Every schoolboy knows that this epithet was given to Poussin in allusion to the profound classical knowledge of the painter. The reviewer, however (Sept. 1841), informs us that the expression refers to his skill in "composition."[1]

† Critique on Royal Academy, 1842.—"He (Mr. Lee) often reminds us of Gainsborough's best manner; but he is *superior* to him always in subject, composition, and variety." Shade of Gainsborough! deep-thoughted, solemn Gainsborough, forgive us for re-writing this sentence; we do so to gibbet its perpetrator for ever, and leave him swinging in the winds of the Fool's Paradise. It is with great pain that I ever speak with severity of the works of living masters, especially when, like Mr. Lee's, they are well-intentioned, simple, free from affectation or imitation, and evidently painted with constant reference to nature. But I believe that these qualities will always secure him that admiration which he deserves, that there will be many unsophisticated and honest minds always ready to follow his guidance, and answer his efforts with delight; and, therefore, that I need not fear to point out in him the want of those technical qualities which are more especially the object of an artist's admiration. Gainsborough's power of colour (it is mentioned by Sir Joshua as his peculiar gift) is capable of taking rank beside that of Rubens; he is the purest colourist, Sir Joshua himself not excepted, of the whole English school; with him, in fact, the *art* of painting did in great part die, and exists not now in Europe. Evidence enough will be seen in the following pages of my devoted admiration of Turner; but I hesitate not to say, that in management and quality of single and particular tint, in the purely technical part of painting, Turner is a child to Gainsborough. Now, Mr. Lee never aims at colour; he does not make it his object in the slightest degree, the spring green of vegetation is all that he desires; and it would be about as rational to compare his works with studied pieces of colouring, as the modulation of the Calabrian pipe with the harmony of a full orchestra. Gainsborough's hand is as light as the sweep of a cloud, as swift as the flash of a sunbeam; Lee's execution is feeble and spotty. Gainsborough's masses are as broad as

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as 'chrysoprase,' which we find to come from χρυσος, gold, and πρασον, a leek, and means a precious stone." Ruskin's reference above is to Rev. xxi. 20, in the description of the walls of the New Jerusalem—"the tenth, a chrysoprasus" (a golden-green variety of the beryl). The chapter was often referred to in his books; see, *e.g.*, *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. ix. § 8, sec. i. ch. xv. § 1; vol. v. ch. xii. § 19; and *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. ch. iv. § 64. Mrs. Browning speaks of "the chrysopras of the orient morning sky" (*A Vision of Poets*).]

[1] [*Blackwood*, No. cited, p. 346, where the reviewer (in "A Critique of the Exhibitions of the Year") quotes Thomson's lines:—

"Whate'er Lorraine light-touch'd with softening hue,
Or savage Rosa dash'd, or learned Poussin drew."

For Poussin "naturalized in antiquity," see below, § 19 *n*.]

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of nature, for we find him puzzled by the epithet "silver," as applied to the orange blossom,[1] evidently never having seen anything silvery about an orange in his life, except a spoon. Nay, he leaves us not to conjecture his calibre from internal evidence; he candidly tells us (Oct. 1842) that he has been studying trees only for the last week,[2] and bases his critical remarks chiefly on

the first division in heaven of light from darkness; Lee's (perhaps necessarily, considering the efforts of flickering sunlight at which he aims) are as fragmentary as his leaves, and as numerous. Gainsborough's forms are grand, simple, and ideal; Lee's are small, confused, and unselected. Gainsborough never loses sight of his picture as a whole; Lee is but too apt to be shackled by its parts. In a word, Gainsborough is an immortal painter, and Lee, though on the right road, is yet in the early stages of his art; and the man who could imagine any resemblance or point of comparison between them is not only a novice in art, but has not capacity ever to be anything more. He may be pardoned for not comprehending Turner, for long preparation and discipline are necessary before the abstract and profound philosophy of that artist can be met; but Gainsborough's excellence is based on principles of art long acknowledged, and facts of Nature universally apparent; and I insist more particularly on the reviewer's want of feeling for his works, because it proves a truth of which the public ought especially to be assured, that those who lavish abuse on the great men of modern times are equally incapable of perceiving the real excellence of established canons, are ignorant of the commonest and most acknowledged principle of the art, blind to the most palpable and comprehensible of its beauties, incapable of distinguishing, if left to themselves, a master's work from the vilest school-copy, and founding their applause of those great works which they praise, either in pure hypocrisy, or in admiration of their defects.[3]

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[1] [The reviewer (Oct. 1843, p. 494) had quoted Ruskin's description of "La Riccia" (pt. ii. sec. ii. ch. ii. § 2, p. 279) and italicised the words *silver* and *orange* ("silver flakes of orange spray"), remarking that such colours cannot co-exist.]

[2] [Again a reference to the review of *Modern Painters* (Oct. 1843, p. 502). (The reference in the text, "1842," is a mistake for "1843.") The reviewer cited Ruskin's description of trees as not tapering until they throw out branch and bud (pt. ii. sec. vi. ch. i. § 2, p. 575), and continued: "We have carefully examined many trees this last week, and find it is not the case; in almost all, the bulging at the bottom, nearest the root, is manifest. There is an early association in our minds that the birch, for instance, is remarkably tapering in its twigs."]

[3] [Frederick Richard Lee (1799–1879), landscape and sea painter, A.R.A. 1834, R.A. 1838, for many years after 1848 worked in collaboration with T. Sidney Cooper, R.A. See *Academy Notes*, 1856 (R.A. No. 221), for Ruskin's appreciation of his sea-pieces, as showing "quite a new energy in his mind." For other references to Gainsborough, see in this vol., pp. 176, 189, 245; and *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi. § 8 *n.*; *Elements of Drawing*, § 133. The reference to Sir Joshua's estimate of Gainsborough is to the fourteenth of his *Discourses*.

The passage from *Blackwood* criticised in the note above occurred in the critique not of 1842, but of 1843 (August 1843, p. 196). For another reference to *Blackwood's* comparison of Lee to Gainsborough, see Ruskin's letter to the *Artist and Amateur's Magazine*, January 1843, in Appendix ii., p. 647.]

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his practical experience of birch. More disinterested than our friend Sancho, he would disenchant the public from the magic of Turner by virtue of his own flagellation; Xanthias-like, he would rob his master of immortality by his own powers of endurance.[1] What is Christopher North about?[2] Does he receive his critiques from Eton or Harrow, based on the experience of a week's bird's-nesting and its consequences?[3] In all kindness to Maga, I warn her, that, though the nature of this work precludes me from devoting space to the exposure, there may come a time when the public shall be themselves able to distinguish ribaldry from reasoning; and may require some better and higher qualifications in their critics of art, than the experience of a schoolboy and the capacities of a buffoon.

14. It is not, however, merely to vindicate the reputation of those whom writers like these defame, which would but be to anticipate by a few years the natural and inevitable reaction of the public mind, that I am devoting years of labour to the development of the principles on which the great productions of recent art are based.[4] I have a higher end in view, one which may, I think, justify me, not only in the sacrifice of my own time, but in calling on my readers to follow me through an investigation far more laborious than could be adequately rewarded by mere insight into the merits of a particular master, or the spirit of a particular age.

It is a question which, in spite of the claims of Painting

[1] [For the reference to Sancho, see *Don Quixote*, Book iv. ch. viii. "Xanthias-like" refers to the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, Xanthias being the slave with whom Dionysus sets forth on his adventures in search of a poet. To escape the wrath of Aeacus, porter at the palace of Pluto, Dionysus changes clothes with Xanthias; whereupon the latter offers his master to Aeacus for vicarious punishment. Dionysus tries to resume his godhead, and Aeacus in bewilderment applies an ordeal by flogging to determine who is who.]

[2] [The *nom de plume* under which Professor John Wilson (1785–1854) contributed his *Noctes Ambrosianæ* to *Blackwood's Magazine*, on the editorial staff of which he had been since 1817.]

[3] [Eds. 2 and 3 add, "How long must art and its interests sink, when the public mind is inadequate to the detection of this effrontery of incapacity! In all kindness," etc.]

[4] [For an explanation of Ruskin's aims in pursuing his studies, see the letters to Gordon and Liddell in Appendix iii., pp. 666, 669].

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to be called the sister of Poetry, appears to me to admit of considerable doubt, whether art has ever, except in its earliest and rudest stages, possessed anything like efficient moral influence on mankind. Better the state of Rome when "magnorum artificum frangebat pocula miles, ut phaleris gauderet equus,"[1] than when her walls flashed with the marble and the gold "nec cessabat luxuria id agere, ut quam plurimum incendiis perdat."[2] Better the state of religion in Italy, before Giotto had broken on one barbarism of the Byzantine schools, than when the painter of the Last Judgment, and the sculptor of the Perseus, sat revelling side by side.[3] It appears to me that a rude symbol is oftener more efficient than a refined one in touching the heart; and that as pictures rise in rank as works of art, they are regarded with less devotion and more curiosity.[4]

15. But, however this may be, and whatever influence we may be disposed to admit in the great works of sacred art, no doubt can, I think, be reasonably entertained as to the utter inutility of all that has been hitherto accomplished by the painters of landscape. No moral end has been answered, no permanent good effected, by any of their works. They may

[1] [From Juvenal's account of the old and hardy days when the soldier was rough and not an amateur of Greek art; when, at the sacking of a town, "he would break goblets by great designers for trappings to please his horse" (*Sat.* xi. 102). Ruskin was perhaps thinking of the same passage when, at the end of ch. ii. of *Unto this Last*, he imagined "that England may cast all thoughts of possessive wealth back to the barbaric nations among whom they first arose; and that, while the sands of the Indus and adamant of Golconda may yet stiffen the housings of the charger . . . she . . . may at last attain to the virtues and the treasures of a Heathen one, and be able to lead forth her Sons, saying, 'These are my Jewels.'"]

[2] [From Pliny's account of the luxurious extravagance of Imperial times, when painting was superseded by marble and gold, and "luxury ceases not to busy itself in order that as much as possible may be lost whenever there is a fire" (*Nat. Hist.*, Book 35, c. 1).]

[3] [For references to Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment" in the Sistine Chapel, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iii. §§ 23, 28. Ruskin had at this time been reading Benvenuto Cellini's Autobiography (see below, p. 144); the painter and the sculptor were friends, if not boon companions, and Cellini (as he relates) was sent to persuade Michael Angelo to return to Florence.]

[4] [The question raised in this section was often to be discussed by Ruskin. It is complicated, and has many sides to it, and therefore his views on it are sometimes misunderstood. For his final statement of the relation of Art to Morals, see ch. iii. of *Lectures on Art* (1870). With this paragraph, *cf.* especially § 77 there; *cf.* also *Two Paths*, Lecture i., and *Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge.*]

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have amused the intellect, or exercised the ingenuity, but they never have spoken to the heart. Landscape art has never taught us one deep or holy lesson; it has not recorded that which is fleeting, nor penetrated that which was hidden, nor interpreted that which was obscure; it has never made us feel the wonder, nor the power, nor the glory of the universe; it has not prompted to devotion, nor touched with awe; its power to move and exalt the heart has been fatally abused, and perished in the abusing. That which ought to have been a witness to the omnipotence of God, has become an exhibition of the dexterity of man; and that which would have lifted our thoughts to the throne of the Deity, has encumbered them with the inventions of his creatures.[1]

If we stand for a little time before any of the more celebrated works of landscape, listening to the comments of the passers-by, we shall hear numberless expressions relating to the skill of the artist, but very few relating to the perfection of nature. Hundreds will be voluble in admiration, for one who will be silent in delight. Multitudes will laud the composition, and depart with the praise of Claude on their lips; not one will feel as if it were *no* composition, and depart with the praise of God in his heart.

16. These are the signs of a debased, mistaken, and false school of painting. The skill of the artist, and the perfection of his art, are never proved until both are forgotten. The artist has done nothing till he has concealed himself; the art is imperfect which is visible; the feelings are but feebly touched, if they permit us to reason on the methods of their excitement. In the reading of a great poem, in the hearing of a noble oration, it is the subject of the writer, and not his skill, his passion, not his power, on which our minds are fixed. We see as he sees, but we see not him. We become part of him, feel with him, judge, behold with him; but we think *of* him as little as of ourselves. Do we think of Æschylus, while we

[1] [*Cf.* the definitions in ch. i. of *The Laws of Fésole* (1877), "The art of man is the expression of his rational and disciplined delight in the forms and laws of the creation of which he forms a part," and "All great art is praise."]

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wait on the silence of Cassandra;* or of Shakspeare, while we listen to the wailing of Lear? Not so. The power of the masters is shown by their self-annihilation. It is commensurate with the degree in which they themselves appear not in their work. The harp of the minstrel is untruly touched, if his own glory is all that it records. Every great writer may be at once known by his guiding the mind far from himself, to the beauty which is not of his creation, and the knowledge which is past his finding out.

And must it ever be otherwise with painting? for otherwise it has ever been. Her subjects have been regarded as mere themes on which the artist's power is to be displayed; and that power, be it of imitation, composition, idealization, or of whatever other kind, is the chief object of the spectator's observation. It is man and his fancies, man and his trickeries, man and his inventions, poor, paltry, weak, self-sighted man, which the connoisseur for ever seeks and worships. Among potsherds and dunghills, among drunken boors and withered beldames, through every scene of debauchery and degradation, we follow the erring artist, not to receive one wholesome lesson, not to be touched with pity, nor moved

* There is a fine touch in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, alluding, probably, to this part of the *Agamemnon* :—

> Ἐγὼ δ' ἔχαιρον τῇ σιωπῇ, καί με τοῦτ' ἔτερπεν
> οὐχ ἧττον ἢ νῦν οἱ λαλοῦντες.[1]

The same remark might be well applied to the seemingly vacant or incomprehensible portions of Turner's canvas. In their mysterious and intense fire, there is much correspondence between the mind of Aeschylus and that of our great painter. They share at least one thing in common—unpopularity.

> Ὁ δῆμος ἀνεβόα κρίσιν ποιεῖν.
> ΞΑ. ὁ τῶν πανούργων; ΑΙ. νὴ Δι', οὐράνιόν γ' ὅσον.
> ΞΑ. μετ' Αἰσχύλου δ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἕτεροι ξύμμαχοι;
> ΑΙ. ὀλίγον τὸ χρηστόν ἐστιν.[2]

[1] [See line 916. Euripides in his contest with Aeschylus has been complaining that the latter muffled up his characters, and left it to the chorus to speak while they were silent. "And I was glad at their silence," says Dionysus, "and this delighted me no less than the chatterers of to-day."]

[2] [See line 783. Aeacus explains to Xanthias that the mob has called out for a public trial between Aeschylus and Euripides. "You mean the mob of scoundrels." "Aye, scoundrels without number." "But had not Aeschylus comrades of another sort?" "The good are few."]

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with indignation, but to watch the dexterity of the pencil, and gloat over the glittering of the hue.

17. I speak not only of the works of the Flemish school, I wage no war with their admirers; they may be left in peace to count the spicula of haystacks and the hairs of donkeys; it is also of works of real mind that I speak, works in which there are evidences of genius and workings of power, works which have been held up as containing all of the beautiful that art can reach or man conceive. And I assert with sorrow, that all hitherto done in landscape, by those commonly conceived its masters, has never prompted one holy thought in the minds of nations. It has begun and ended in exhibiting the dexterities of individuals, and conventionalities of systems. Filling the world with the honour of Claude and Salvator, it has never once tended to the honour of God.

Does the reader start in reading these last words, as if they were those of wild enthusiasm, as if I were lowering the dignity of religion by supposing that its cause could be advanced by such means? His surprise proves my position. It *does* sound like wild, like absurd enthusiasm, to expect any definite moral agency in the painters of landscape; but ought it so to sound? Are the gorgeousness of the visible hue, the glory of the realized form, instruments in the artist's hand so ineffective, that they can answer no nobler purpose than the amusement of curiosity, or the engagement of idleness? Must it not be owing to gross neglect or misapplication of the means at his command, that while words and tones (means of representing nature surely less powerful than lines and colours) can kindle and purify the very inmost souls of men, the painter can only hope to entertain by his efforts at expression, and must remain for ever brooding over his incommunicable thoughts?[1]

18. The cause of the evil lies, I believe, deep-seated in the system of ancient landscape art; it consists, in a word, in the painter's taking upon him to modify God's works at his

[1] [It is interesting to compare this passage with the *Essay on the Studies of Painting and Music*, written by Ruskin in 1838 (Vol. I. pp. 267 *seqq.*). The superiority which he there claims for painting is based on its power of communicating thoughts and "addressing the intellect"—a capacity which he denied to music.]

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pleasure, casting the shadow of himself on all he sees, constituting himself arbiter where it is honour to be a disciple, and exhibiting his ingenuity by the attainment of combinations whose highest praise is that they are impossible. We shall not pass through a single gallery of old art, without hearing this topic of praise confidently advanced. The sense of artificialness, the absence of all appearance of reality, the clumsiness of combination by which the meddling of man is made evident, and the feebleness of his hand branded on the inorganization of his monstrous creature, are advanced as a proof of inventive power, as an evidence of abstracted conception; nay, the violation of specific form, the utter abandonment of all organic and individual character of object (numberless examples of which from the works of the old masters are given in the following pages), is constantly held up by the unthinking critic as the foundation of the grand or historical style, and the first step to the attainment of a pure ideal. Now there is but one grand style, in the treatment of all subjects whatsoever, and that style is based on the *perfect* knowledge, and consists in the simple unencumbered rendering, of the specific characters of the given object, be it man, beast, or flower. Every change, caricature, or abandonment of such specific character is as destructive of grandeur as it is of truth, of beauty as of propriety. Every alteration of the features of nature has its origin either in powerless indolence or blind audacity; in the folly which forgets, or the insolence which desecrates, works which it is the pride of angels to know, and their privilege to love.[1]

19. We sometimes hear such infringement of universal laws justified on the plea, that the frequent introduction of

[1] [To understand Ruskin aright it is necessary to emphasize the word *specific* in this passage, and in the following paragraph the word *universal*. Careless readers have sometimes found a contradiction between passages such as this and Ruskin's subsequent defence of "Turnerian Topography" (*Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. ii.). "The fact is," it has been said, "that Ruskin never could make up his mind whether to espouse the realist or the idealist view of landscape-painting." The confusion exists not in Ruskin's mind, but in the failure of his critics in this matter to follow the distinction between vital truth and topographical accuracy. Ruskin never denied or disparaged the value of imagination and the place of composition in landscape-painting. What he maintained is, that both must be consistent with truth of specific character, or "vital truth," as he sometimes called it. Topographical accuracy is one thing; it has its place and value in Art, but it is a lower form of Art than imaginative impression.

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mythological abstractions into ancient landscape requires an imaginary character of form in the material objects with which they are associated. Something of this kind is hinted in Reynolds' fourteenth Discourse;[1] but nothing can be more false than such reasoning. If there be any truth or beauty in the original conception of the spiritual being so introduced, there must be a true and real connection between that abstract idea * and the features of nature as she was and is. The woods and waters which were peopled by the Greek with typical life were not different from those which now wave and murmur by the ruins of his shrines. With their visible and actual forms was his imagination filled, and the beauty of its incarnate creatures can only be understood among the pure realities which originally modelled their conception. If divinity be stamped upon the features, or apparent in the form, of the spiritual creature, the mind will not be shocked by its appearing

* I do not know any passage in ancient literature in which this connection is more exquisitely illustrated than in the lines, burlesque though they be, descriptive of the approach of the chorus in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes; a writer, by-the-by, who, I believe, knew and felt more of the noble landscape character of his country than any whose works have come down to us, except Homer. The individuality and distinctness of conception, the visible cloud character which every word of this particular passage brings out into more dewy and bright existence, are to me as refreshing as the real breathing of mountain winds. The line "διὰ τῶν κοίλων καὶ τῶν δασέων αὗται πλάγιαι," could have been written by none but an ardent lover of hill scenery, one who had watched, hour after hour, the peculiar oblique sidelong action of descending clouds, as they form along the hollows and ravines of the hills. There are no lumpish solidities, no pillowy protuberances here. All is melting, drifting, evanescent; full of air, and light, and dew.[2]

Truth of form is another thing; it is vital, and must never be sacrificed to ideal generalisations resulting in unnatural forms or uncharacteristic compositions. A painter may, or may not, be justified in moving a tree from this place to that; he cannot be justified in making an oak bend like "india-rubber." *Cf.* below, note on p. 624.]

[1] [As, for instance, when Sir Joshua says: "To manage a subject of this [mythological] kind, a peculiar style of art is required; and it can only be done without impropriety, or even without ridicule, when we adapt the character of the landscape, and that, too, in all parts, to the historical or poetical representation: this is a very difficult adventure, and it requires a mind thrown back two thousand years, and, as it were, naturalized in antiquity, like that of Nicolas Poussin, to achieve it." For a note on Ruskin's general opinion of Reynolds' *Discourses*, see Vol. I. p. 491, and *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. i.]

[2] [The passage quoted is line 325 of *The Clouds*, "Through the hollows and the thickets they come aslant." For other references to Aristophanes in this connection, see *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xv. § 21, ch. xvi. § 3, and vol. v. pt. vii. ch. iv. § 10.]

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to ride upon the whirlwind, and trample on the storm; but if mortality, no violation of the characters of the earth will forge one single link to bind it to the heaven.

20. Is there then no such thing as elevated ideal character of landscape? Undoubtedly; and Sir Joshua, with the great master of this character, Nicolo Poussin, present to his thoughts, ought to have arrived at more true conclusions respecting its essence, than, as we shall presently see, are deducible from his works. The true ideal of landscape is precisely the same as that of the human form; it is the expression of the specific—not the individual, but the specific—characters of every object, in their perfection. There is an ideal form of every herb, flower, and tree, it is that form to which every individual of the species has a tendency to arrive, freed from the influence of accident or disease.[1] Every landscape painter should know the specific characters of every object he has to represent, rock, flower, or cloud; and in his highest ideal works all their distinctions will be perfectly expressed, broadly or delicately, slightly or completely, according to the nature of the subject, and the degree of attention which is to be drawn to the particular object by the part it plays in the composition. Where the sublime is aimed at, such distinctions will be indicated with severe simplicity, as the muscular markings in a colossal statue; where beauty is the object, they must be expressed with the utmost refinement of which the hand is capable.

21. This may sound like a contradiction of principles advanced by the highest authorities; but it is only a contradiction of a particular and most mistaken application of them. Much evil has been done to art by the remarks of historical painters on landscape. Accustomed themselves to treat their backgrounds slightly and boldly, and feeling (though, as I shall presently show, only in consequence of their own deficient powers) that any approach to completeness of detail therein injures their picture by interfering with its principal subject, they naturally lose sight of the peculiar and intrinsic beauties

[1] [Ruskin here applies, it will be seen, the Platonic doctrine of "ideas" as archetypes and patterns. While writing this part of *Modern Painters*, he "read a little bit of Plato very accurately every day": see *Letters to a College Friend*, Vol. I. p. 494.]

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of things which to them are injurious, unless subordinate. Hence the frequent advice given by Reynolds and others, to neglect *specific* form in landscape, and treat its materials in large masses, aiming only at general truths; the flexibility of foliage, but not its kind; the rigidity of rock, but not its mineral character. In the passage more especially bearing on this subject (in the eleventh Lecture of Sir J. Reynolds), we are told that "the landscape painter works not for the virtuoso or the naturalist, but for the general observer of life and nature." This is true, in precisely the same sense that the sculptor does not work for the anatomist, but for the common observer of life and nature. Yet the sculptor is not, for this reason, permitted to be wanting either in knowledge or expression of anatomical detail; and the more refined that expression can be rendered, the more perfect is his work. That which to the anatomist is the end, is to the sculptor the means. The former desires details for their own sake; the latter, that by means of them he may kindle his work with life, and stamp it with beauty. And so in landscape; botanical or geological details are not to be given as matter of curiosity or subject of search, but as the ultimate elements of every species of expression and order of loveliness.

22. In his observation on the foreground of the San Pietro Martire, Sir Joshua advances,[1] as matter of praise, that the plants are discriminated "just as much as was necessary for variety, and no more." Had this foreground been occupied by a group of animals, we should have been surprised to be told that the lion, the serpent, and the dove, or whatever other creatures might have been introduced, were distinguished from each other just as much as was necessary for variety, and no more. Yet is it to be supposed that the distinctions of the vegetable world are less complete, less essential, or less divine in origin, than those of the animal? If the distinctive forms of animal life are meant for our reverent observance, is it likely that those of vegetable life are made merely to be swept away?

[1] [In the same *Discourse*, No. xi. This picture perished by fire in the sacristy of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Venice, in 1866. For other references to it, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. ii. §§ 19, 22 *n.*, ch. iv. § 17; vol. v. pt. vi. ch. viii. § 13, pt. ix. ch. iii. § 17; *Academy Notes*, 1856; *Notes on Prout and Hunt*, pref. § 39.]

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The latter are indeed less obvious and less obtrusive; for which very reason there is less excuse for omitting them, because there is less danger of their disturbing the attention or engaging the fancy.

23. But Sir Joshua is as inaccurate in fact, as false in principle. He himself furnishes a most singular instance of the very error of which he accuses Vasari,—the seeing what he expects; or, rather, in the present case, not seeing what he does not expect. The great masters of Italy, almost without exception, and Titian perhaps more than any (for he had the highest knowledge of landscape), are in the constant habit of rendering every detail of their foregrounds with the most laborious botanical fidelity: witness the "Bacchus and Ariadne," in which the foreground is occupied by the common blue iris, the aquilegia, and the wild rose;* *every stamen* of which latter is given, while the blossoms and leaves of the columbine (a difficult flower to draw) have been studied with the most exquisite accuracy. The foregrounds of Raffaelle's two cartoons,[1] "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes," and

* A mistake, of which the reader will find the correction in the following letter, for which I sincerely thank the writer, and which I think it right to publish, as it is no less confirmatory of the principal assertions in the text, which it is my great object to establish, than condemnatory of my carelessness in mistaking the plant in question :—

"Mr. Newton, of the Department of Antiquities, mentioned to me your name, and I then told him of a slight (but important to the naturalist) unintentional inaccuracy into which you had fallen at p. xxvii. of the 'Preface to the Second Edition' (I quote ed. 3, London, 1846), in which, speaking of the 'Bacchus and Ariadne,' a picture which, like you, I have absolutely, mentally and ocularly, '*swallowed*' many a time, you speak of '*the wild rose*, every stamen,' etc.; now, as you afterwards refer *botanically* to the *Crambe maritima*, allow me to say that the plant you call a wild rose is an admirable study from a common Italian and Greek plant, figured in Sibthorp's 'Flora Græca,' and called *Capparis spinosa*. By calling some day, when you are in the Museum direction, I can show you *this*: or should you be near the Linnæan Society's house, Soho Square (in the corner), and should ask for Mr. *Kippist*, the librarian, he will show you Sibthorp's figure.—ADAM WHITE. *Zoological Department, British Museum, March* 13, 1849."[2]

[1] [In the Victoria and Albert (South Kensington) Museum. For other references to "The Charge to Peter," see *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. iv. § 16, ch. xviii. § 14; to the "Miraculous Draught," vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iv. § 12, vol. iii. ch. xviii. §§ 10, 14, vol. v. pt. vi. ch. v. § 8.]

[2] [This note was first added in the 5th ed. (1851). The "Bacchus and Ariadne" is No. 35 in the National Gallery; see below, note on pt. ii. sec. ii. ch. i. § 15, p. 268.]

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"The Charge to Peter," are covered with plants of the common sea colewort (*Crambe maritima*),[1] of which the sinuated leaves and clustered blossoms would have exhausted the patience of any other artist; but have appeared worthy of prolonged and thoughtful labour to the great mind of Raffaelle.

It appears, then, not only from natural principles, but from the highest of all authority, that thorough knowledge of the lowest details is necessary, and full expression of them right, even in the highest class of historical painting; that it will not take away from, nor interfere with, the interest of the figures, but, rightly managed, must add to and elucidate it; and, if further proof be wanting, I would desire the reader to compare the background of Sir Joshua's "Holy Family," in the National Gallery, with that of Nicolo Poussin's "Nursing of Jupiter," in the Dulwich Gallery.[2] The first, owing to the utter neglect of all botanical detail, has lost every atom of ideal character, and reminds us of nothing but an English fashionable flower-garden; the formal pedestal adding considerably to the effect. Poussin's, in which every vine leaf is drawn with consummate skill and untiring diligence, produces not only a tree group of the most perfect grace and beauty, but one which, in its pure and simple truth, belongs to every age of nature, and adapts itself to the history of all time. If then, such entire rendering of specific character be necessary to the historical painter, in cases where these lower details are entirely subordinate to his human subject, how much more must it be necessary in landscape, where they themselves constitute the subject, and where the undivided attention is to be drawn to them!

24. There is a singular sense in which the child may peculiarly be said to be father of the man. In many arts and attainments, the first and last stages of progress, the infancy

[1] ["To-day all went right," says Ruskin in his diary, Feb. 15, 1844, ". . . and I have found out the plant of Raphael's sea-beach foregrounds to be the Crambe maritima —very curious."]

[2] [Reynolds' "Holy Family," No. 78 in the National Gallery collection, is now a wreck, owing to the painter's unfortunate experiments with his pigments, and is no longer exhibited to the public. For another reference to it, see "Sir Joshua and Holbein" (*On the Old Road*, ed. 1899, vol. i. §§ 149, 155). Poussin's "The Infant Jupiter suckled by the goat Amalthea" is No. 234 (formerly No. 300) in the Dulwich Gallery. For another reference to it, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. v. § 17.]

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and the consummation, have many features in common; while the intermediate stages are wholly unlike either, and are farthest from the right. Thus it is in the progress of a painter's handling. We see the perfect child, the absolute beginner, using of necessity a broken, imperfect, inadequate line, which, as he advances, becomes gradually firm, severe, and decided. Yet before he becomes a perfect artist, this severity and decision will again be exchanged for a light and careless stroke, which in many points will far more resemble that of his childhood than of his middle age, differing from it only by the consummate effect wrought out by the apparently inadequate means. So it is in many matters of opinion. Our first and last coincide, though on different grounds; it is the middle stage which is farthest from the truth. Childhood often holds a truth with its feeble fingers, which the grasp of manhood cannot retain, which it is the pride of utmost age to recover.

Perhaps this is in no instance more remarkable than in the opinion we form upon the subject of detail in works of art.[1] Infants in judgment, we look for specific character, and complete finish; we delight in the faithful plumage of the well-known bird, in the finely drawn leafage of the discriminated flower. As we advance in judgment, we scorn such detail altogether; we look for impetuosity of execution, and breadth of effect. But, perfected in judgment, we return in a great measure to our early feelings, and thank Raffaelle for the shells upon his sacred beach,[2] and for the delicate stamens of the herbage beside his inspired St. Catherine.*

25. Of those who take interest in art, nay, even of artists themselves, there are a hundred in the middle stage of judgment,

* Let not this principle be confused with Fuseli's "love for what is called deception in painting marks either the infancy or decrepitude of a nation's taste."[3] Realization to the mind necessitates not deception to the eye.

[1] [Cf. *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. iv. §§ 22 *seqq.*]

[2] [The reference is to the cartoons mentioned above in § 23. Raphael's "St. Catherine" is No. 168 in the National Gallery; for other references to it, see below, p. 253, and *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xii. § 10, sec. ii. ch. v. § 21 (where the saint is described as, in this picture, "looking up to heaven in the dawn of the eternal day").]

[3] [See *The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli, R.A.*, ed. J. Knowles, 1831, vol. iii. p. 107 (Aphorism, No. 125). For Ruskin's appreciation of Fuseli's writings, see *Letters to a College Friend*, Vol. I. p. 491.]

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for one who is in the last; and this, not because they are destitute of the power to discover, or the sensibility to enjoy, the truth, but because the truth bears so much semblance of error, the last stage of the journey to the first, that every feeling which guides to it is checked in its origin. The rapid and powerful artist necessarily looks with such contempt on those who see minutiæ of detail *rather* than grandeur of impression, that it is almost impossible for him to conceive of the great last step in art by which both become compatible. He has so often to dash the delicacy out of the pupil's work, and to blot the details from his encumbered canvas; so frequently to lament the loss of breadth and unity, and so seldom to reprehend the imperfection of minutiæ, that he necessarily looks upon complete *parts* as the very sign of error, weakness, and ignorance. Thus, frequently to the latest period of his life, he separates, like Sir Joshua, as chief enemies, the details and the whole, which an artist cannot be great unless he reconciles; and because details alone, and unreferred to a final purpose, are the sign of a tyro's work, he loses sight of the remoter truth, that details perfect in unity, and contributing to a final purpose, are the sign of the production of a consummate master.

26. It is not, therefore, detail sought for its own sake, not the calculable bricks of the Dutch house-painters, nor the numbered hairs and mapped wrinkles of Denner,[1] which constitute great art, they are the lowest and most contemptible art; but it is detail referred to a great end, sought for the sake of the inestimable beauty which exists in the slightest and least of God's works, and treated in a manly, broad, and impressive manner. There may be as much greatness of mind, as much nobility of manner, in a master's treatment of the smallest features, as in his management of the most

[1] [Balthasar Denner, German painter, 1685–1749; examples of his heads of old men and women may be seen in the Louvre, at Hampton Court, and in most of the Continental galleries. *Cf.* below, § 29. Ruskin notes in his diary (Feb. 26, 1844):—

> ". . . to Watling Street with Harrison to see a curious collection of a cotton manufacturer's set. A head by Denner: I never remember seeing one before, and was much gratified by the fine quality of flesh colour in it, as well as by the amazing delicacy of hand. Nothing else in it but bad taste."]

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vast; and this greatness of manner chiefly consists in seizing the specific character of the object, together with all the great qualities of beauty which it has in common with higher orders of existence,* while he utterly rejects the meaner beauties which are accidentally peculiar to the object, and yet not specifically characteristic of it. I cannot give a better instance than the painting of the flowers in Titian's picture above mentioned.[1] While every stamen of the rose is given, because this was necessary to mark the flower, and while the curves and large characters of the leaves are rendered with exquisite fidelity, there is no vestige of particular texture, of moss, bloom, moisture, or any other accident, no dewdrops, nor flies, nor trickeries of any kind;[2] nothing beyond the simple forms and hues of the flowers, even those hues themselves being simplified and broadly rendered. The varieties of Aquilegia have, in reality, a greyish and uncertain tone of colour; and, I believe, never attain the intense purity of blue with which Titian has gifted his flower. But the master does not aim at the particular colour of individual blossoms; he seizes the type of all, and gives it with the utmost purity and simplicity of which colour is capable.

27. These laws being observed, it will not only be in the power, it will be the duty, the imperative duty of the landscape painter, to descend to the lowest details with undiminished attention. Every herb and flower of the field has its specific, distinct, and perfect beauty; it has its peculiar habitation, expression, and function. The highest art is that which seizes this specific character, which develops and illustrates it, which assigns to it its proper position in the landscape, and which, by means of it, enhances and enforces the great impression which the picture is intended to convey. Nor is it of herbs

* I shall show, in a future portion of the work, that there are principles of universal beauty common to all the creatures of God; and that it is by the greater or less share of these that one form becomes nobler or meaner than another.[3]

[1] [Above, § 23.]
[2] [Cf. *Notes on Prout and Hunt*, pref., §§ 13, 14.]
[3] [See *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i.]

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and flowers alone that such scientific representation is required. Every class of rock, every kind of earth, every form of cloud, must be studied with equal industry, and rendered with equal precision. And thus we find ourselves unavoidably led to a conclusion directly opposed to that constantly enunciated dogma of the parrot-critic, that the features of nature must be "generalized"; a dogma whose inherent and broad absurdity would long ago have been detected, if it had not contained in its convenient falsehood an apology for indolence, and a disguise for incapacity. Generalized! As if it were possible to generalize things generically different. Of such common cant of criticism I extract a characteristic passage from one of the reviews of this work, that in this year's *Athenæum* for February 10:—"He (the author) would have geologic land-"scape painters, dendrologic, meteorologic, and doubtless en-"tomologic, ichthyologic, every kind of physiologic painter "united in the same person; yet, alas for true poetic art "among all these learned Thebans! No; landscape painting "must not be reduced to mere portraiture of inanimate sub-"stances, Denner-like portraiture of the earth's face. . . . "Ancient landscapists took a broader, deeper, higher view "of their art: they neglected particular traits, and gave "only general features. Thus they attained mass and force, "harmonious union and simple effect, elements of grandeur "and beauty."[1]

28. To all such criticism as this (and I notice it only because it expresses the feelings into which many sensible and thoughtful minds have been fashioned by infection), the answer is simple and straightforward. It is just as impossible to generalize granite and slate, as it is to generalize a man and a cow. An animal must be either one animal or another animal: it cannot be a general animal, or it is no animal; and so a rock must be either one rock or another rock; it cannot be a general rock, or it is no rock. If there were a creature in the foreground of a picture of which he could not decide whether

[1] [From a "second notice" of the first volume of *Modern Painters*, in the number for Feb. 10, 1844; see above, Introduction, p. xliii.]

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it were a pony or a pig, the *Athenæum* critic would perhaps affirm it to be a generalization of pony and pig, and consequently a high example of "harmonious union and simple effect." But *I* should call it simple bad drawing. And so when there are things in the foreground of Salvator of which I cannot pronounce whether they be granite, or slate, or tufa, I affirm that there is in them neither harmonious union, nor simple effect, but simple monstrosity. There is no grandeur, no beauty of any sort or kind, nothing but destruction, disorganization, and ruin, to be obtained by the violation of natural distinctions. The elements of brutes can only mix in corruption, the elements of inorganic nature only in annihilation. We may, if we choose, put together centaur monsters; but they must still be half man, half horse; they cannot be both man and horse, nor either man or horse.[1] And so, if landscape painters choose, they may give us rocks which shall be half granite and half slate; but they cannot give us rocks which shall be either granite or slate, nor which shall be both granite and slate. Every attempt to produce that which shall be *any* rock, ends in the production of that which is *no* rock.

29. It is true that the distinctions of rocks and plants and clouds are less conspicuous, and less constantly subjects of observation, than those of the animal creation; but the difficulty of observing them proves not the merit of overlooking them. It only accounts for the singular fact, that the world has never yet seen anything like a perfect school of landscape. For just as the highest historical painting is based on perfect knowledge of the workings of the human form and human mind, so must the highest landscape painting be based on perfect cognizance of the form, functions, and system of every organic or definitely structured existence which it has to represent. This proportion is self-evident to every thinking mind; and every principle which appears to contradict it is either

[1] [Ruskin at this time often went to the British Museum to study the Elgin marbles. The treatment of the centaurs in the metopes of the Parthenon may well have suggested to him the remark made above; see E. T. Cook's *Popular Handbook to the Greek and Roman Antiquities*, 1903, p. 172; and cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iii. § 29.]

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misstated or misunderstood. For instance, the *Athenæum* critic calls the right statement of generic difference "*Denner*-like portraiture." If he can find anything like Denner in what I have advanced as the utmost perfection of landscape art, the recent works of Turner, he is welcome to his discovery and his theory. No; Denner-like portraiture would be the endeavour to paint the separate crystals of quartz and felspar in the granite, and the separate flakes of mica in the mica slate; an attempt just as far removed from what I assert to be great art (the bold rendering of the generic characters of form in both rocks), as modern sculpture of lace and button-holes is from the Elgin marbles. Martin has attempted this Denner-like portraiture of sea foam with the assistance of an acre of canvas; with what success, I believe the critics of his last year's "Canute" had, for once, sense enough to decide.[1]

30. Again, it does not follow that, because such accurate knowledge is *necessary* to the painter, it should constitute the painter; nor that such knowledge is valuable in itself, and without reference to high ends. Every kind of knowledge may be sought from ignoble motives, and for ignoble ends; and in those who so possess it, it is ignoble knowledge; while the very same knowledge is in another mind an attainment of the highest dignity, and conveying the greatest blessing. This is the difference between the mere botanist's knowledge of plants, and the great poet's or painter's knowledge of them.[2] The one notes their distinctions for the sake of swelling his herbarium, the other, that he may render them vehicles of expression and emotion. The one counts the stamens, and affixes a name, and is content; the other observes every character of the plant's colour and form; considering each of its attributes as an element of expression, he seizes on its lines of grace or energy, rigidity or repose; notes the feebleness or the vigour, the serenity or tremulousness of its hues; observes

[1] [For Martin, see Vol. I. p. 243, note 2; and below, § 33 *n.*]

[2] [After many years, Ruskin attempted in *Proserpina* to write a handbook of what he here calls the poet's or painter's Botany. See author's introduction to that book (1874), where he refers to his studies of Alpine botany at Chamouni in 1842, and adds, "But *Blackwood's Magazine*, with its insults to Turner, dragged me into controversy; and I have not had, properly speaking, a day's peace since."]

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its local habits, its love or fear of peculiar places, its nourishment or destruction by particular influences; he associates it in his mind with all the features of the situations it inhabits, and the ministering agencies necessary to its support. Thenceforward the flower is to him a living creature, with histories written on its leaves, and passions breathing in its motion. Its occurrence in his picture is no mere point of colour, no meaningless spark of light. It is a voice rising from the earth, a new chord of the mind's music, a necessary note in the harmony of his picture, contributing alike to its tenderness and its dignity, nor less to its loveliness than its truth.

31. The particularization of flowers by Shakspeare and Shelley affords us the most frequent examples of the exalted use of these inferior details.[1] It is true that the painter has not the same power of expressing the thoughts with which the symbols are connected; he is dependent in some degree on the knowledge and feeling of the spectator; but by the destruction of such details, his foreground is not rendered more intelligible to the ignorant, although it ceases to have interest with the informed. It is no excuse for illegible writing, that there are persons who could not have read it had it been plain.

32. I repeat then, generalization, as the word is commonly understood, is the act of a vulgar, incapable, and unthinking mind. To see in all mountains nothing but similar heaps of earth; in all rocks, nothing but similar concretions of solid matter; in all trees, nothing but similar accumulations of leaves, is no sign of high feeling or extended thought. The more we know, and the more we feel, the more we separate; we separate to obtain a more perfect unity. Stones, in the thoughts of the peasant, lie as they do on his field; one is like another, and there is no connection between any of them. The geologist distinguishes, and in distinguishing connects them. Each becomes different from his fellow, but in differing from, assumes a relation to, his fellow; they are no more each the

[1] [For an earlier reference to the flower-fancies of Shelley and Shakspeare, see *The Poetry of Architecture*, § 211 *n.*, where also, in this edition, other references are collected (Vol. I. p. 158 *n.*).]

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repetition of the other, they are parts of a system; and each implies and is connected with the existence of the rest. That generalization then is right, true, and noble, which is based on the knowledge of the distinctions and observance of the relations of individual kinds. That generalization is wrong, false, and contemptible, which is based on ignorance of the one, and disturbance of the other. It is indeed no generalization, but confusion and chaos; it is the generalization of a defeated army into undistinguishable impotence, the generalization of the elements of a dead carcass into dust.

33. Let us, then, without farther notice of the dogmata of the schools of art, follow forth those conclusions to which we are led by observance of the laws of nature.

I have just said that every class of rock, earth, and cloud, must be known by the painter, with geologic and meteorologic accuracy.* Nor is this merely for the sake of obtaining the character of these minor features themselves, but more especially for the sake of reaching that simple, earnest, and consistent character which is visible in the *whole* effect of every natural landscape. Every geological formation has features entirely peculiar to itself; definite lines of fracture, giving rise to fixed resultant forms of rock and earth; peculiar vegetable products, among which still farther distinctions are wrought out by variations of climate and elevation. From such modifying circumstances arise the infinite varieties of the orders of landscape, of which each one shows perfect harmony among its several features, and possesses an ideal beauty of its own; a beauty not distinguished merely by such peculiarities as are

* Is not this, it may be asked, demanding more from him than life can accomplish? Not one whit. Nothing more than knowledge of external characteristics is absolutely required; and even if, which were more desirable, thorough scientific knowledge had to be attained, the time which our artists spend in multiplying crude sketches, or finishing their unintelligent embryos of the study, would render them masters of every science that modern investigations have organized, and familiar with every form that nature manifests. Martin, if the time which he must have spent on the abortive bubbles of his "Canute" had been passed in walking on the sea-shore, might have learned enough to enable him to produce, with a few strokes, a picture which would have smote, like the sound of the sea, upon men's hearts for ever.

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wrought on the human form by change of climate, but by generic differences the most marked and essential; so that its classes cannot be generalized or amalgamated by any expedients whatsoever. The level marshes and rich meadows of the tertiary, the rounded swells and short pastures of the chalk, the square-built cliffs and cloven dells of the lower limestone, the soaring peaks and ridgy precipices of the primaries, have nothing in common among them, nothing which is not distinctive and incommunicable. Their very atmospheres are different, their clouds are different, their humours of storm and sunshine are different, their flowers, animals, and forests are different. By each order of landscape, and its orders, I repeat, are infinite in number, corresponding not only to the several species of rock, but to the particular circumstances of the rock's deposition or after-treatment, and to the incalculable varieties of climate, aspect, and human interference; by each order of landscape, I say, peculiar lessons are intended to be taught, and distinct pleasures to be conveyed; and it is as utterly futile to talk of generalizing their impressions into an ideal landscape, as to talk of amalgamating all nourishment into one ideal food, gathering all music into one ideal movement, or confounding all thought into one ideal idea.

34. There is, however, such a thing as composition of different orders of landscape, though there can be no generalization of them. Nature herself perpetually brings together elements of various expression. Her barren rocks stoop through wooded promontories to the plain; and the wreaths of the vine show through their green shadows the wan light of unperishing snow.

The painter, therefore, has the choice of either working out the isolated character of some one distinct class of scene, or of bringing together a multitude of different elements, which may adorn each other by contrast.

I believe that the simple and uncombined landscape, if wrought out with due attention to the ideal beauty of the features it includes, will always be the most powerful in its appeal to the heart. Contrast increases the splendour of

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beauty, but it disturbs its influence; it adds to its attractiveness, but diminishes its power.[1] On this subject I shall have much to say hereafter;[2] at present I merely wish to suggest the possibility, that the single-minded painter, who is working out, on broad and simple principles, a piece of unbroken harmonious landscape character, may be reaching an end in art quite as high as the more ambitious student who is always "within five minutes' walk of everywhere," making the ends of the earth contribute to his pictorial guazzetto;* and the certainty, that unless the composition of the latter be regulated by severe judgment, and its members connected by natural links, it must become more contemptible in its motley, than an honest study of roadside weeds.

35. Let me, at the risk of tediously repeating what is universally known, refer to the common principles of historical composition, in order that I may show their application to that of landscape. The merest tyro in art knows that every figure which is unnecessary to his picture is an encumbrance to it, and that every figure which does not sympathize with the action interrupts it. He that gathereth not with me scattereth,[3] is, or ought to be, the ruling principle of his plan; and the power and grandeur of his result will be exactly proportioned to the unity of feeling manifested in its several parts, and to the propriety and simplicity of the relations in which they stand to each other.

All this is equally applicable to the materials of inanimate nature. Impressiveness is destroyed by a multitude of contradictory facts, and the accumulation which is not harmonious is discordant. He who endeavours to unite simplicity with magnificence, to guide from solitude to festivity, and to contrast

* "A green field is a sight which makes us pardon
The absence of that more sublime construction
Which mixes up vines, olives, precipices,
Glaciers, volcanoes, oranges, and ices."—*Don Juan*.[4]

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[1] [Cf. *The Poetry of Architecture*, § 231 (Vol. I. p. 172).]

[2] ["The Law of Contrast" in composition was worked out by Ruskin in *The Elements of Drawing*, §§ 221 *seqq*.]

[3] [Matthew, xii. 30; Luke, xi. 23. On Ruskin's Bible references, see below, p. 674.]

[4] [Canto x. 76. Guazzetto, the Italian ragout: *cf.* "the legitimate landscape ragout," p. 135 *n*.]

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melancholy with mirth, must end by the production of confused inanity. There is a peculiar spirit possessed by every kind of scene; and although a point of contrast may sometimes enhance and exhibit this particular feeling more intensely, it must be only a point, not an equalized opposition. Every introduction of new and different feeling weakens the force of what has already been impressed, and the mingling of all emotions must conclude in apathy, as the mingling of all colours in white.

86. Let us test by these simple rules one of the "ideal" landscape compositions of Claude, that known to the Italians as "Il Mulino."[1]

The foreground is a piece of very lovely and perfect forest scenery, with a dance of peasants by a brook-side; quite enough subject to form, in the hands of a master, an impressive and complete picture. On the other side of the brook, however, we have a piece of pastoral life; a man with some bulls and goats tumbling headforemost into the water, owing to some sudden paralytic affection of all their legs. Even this group is one too many; the shepherd had no business to drive his flock so near the dancers, and the dancers will certainly frighten the cattle. But when we look farther into the picture, our feelings receive a sudden and violent shock, by the unexpected appearance, amidst things pastoral and musical, of the military; a number of Roman soldiers riding in on hobby-horses, with a leader on foot, apparently encouraging them to make an immediate and decisive charge on the musicians. Beyond the soldiers is a circular temple, in exceedingly bad repair; and close beside it, built against its very walls, a neat water-mill in full work. By the mill flows a large river with

[1] [A version of this composition is No. 12 in the National Gallery. It and No. 14 ("The Queen of Sheba") were the two Claudes which Turner selected for "the noble passage of arms to which he challenged his rival from the grave." Turner's pictures—"The Sun rising in a Mist" (479) and "Dido building Carthage" (490)—hang in the National Gallery (in accordance with the terms of his will) beside the two Claudes. The Claude, No. 12, is inscribed "Mariage d'Isaac avec Rebecca," but it is a repetition with some variations in detail of the Claude known as "Il Mulino" (The Mill) in the Doria Palace at Rome. For other references to the picture, see below, pp. 282, 305, 331, 348, 426, 437. For Ruskin's attitude to Claude generally, see above, Introduction, p. xxxiv.]

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a weir all across it. The weir has not been made for the mill (for that receives its water from the hills by a trough carried over the temple), but it is particularly ugly and monotonous in its line of fall, and the water below forms a dead-looking pond, on which some people are fishing in punts. The banks of this river resemble in contour the later geological formations around London, constituted chiefly of broken pots and oyster-shells. At an inconvenient distance from the water-side stands a city, composed of twenty-five round towers and a pyramid. Beyond the city is a handsome bridge; beyond the bridge, part of the Campagna, with fragments of aqueducts; beyond the Campagna, the chain of the Alps; on the left, the cascades of Tivoli.

This is, I believe, a fair example of what is commonly called an "ideal" landscape; *i.e.* a group of the artist's studies from Nature, individually spoiled, selected with such opposition of character as may insure their neutralizing each other's effect, and united with sufficient unnaturalness and violence of association to insure their producing a general sensation of the impossible. Let us analyse the separate subjects a little in this ideal work of Claude's.

37. Perhaps there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Campagna of Rome under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the living world, and sent forth alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumbles beneath his foot, tread he never so lightly, for its substance is white, hollow, and carious, like the dusty wreck of the bones of men.* The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him, as if the dead beneath were struggling in their sleep; scattered blocks of black stone, four-square,

* The vegetable soil of the Campagna is chiefly formed by decomposed lavas, and under it lies a bed of white pumice, exactly resembling remnants of bones.

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remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull purple poisonous haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of massy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests, like a dying fire on defiled altars. The blue ridge of the Alban Mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet sky. Watch-towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontories of the Apennines. From the plain to the mountains, the shattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness, like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners, passing from a nation's grave.[1]

88. Let us, with Claude, make a few "ideal" alterations in this landscape. First, we will reduce the multitudinous precipices of the Apennines to four sugar-loaves. Secondly, we will remove the Alban Mount, and put a large dust-heap in its stead. Next we will knock down the greater part of the aqueducts, and leave only an arch or two, that their infinity of length may no longer be painful from its monotony. For the purple mist and declining sun, we will substitute a bright blue sky, with round white clouds. Finally, we will get rid of the unpleasant ruins in the foreground; we will plant some handsome trees therein, we will send for some fiddlers, and get up a dance, and a picnic party.

[1] [§ 37 is printed in *Frondes Agrestes*, § 88. The description was founded on reminiscences of Ruskin's winter at Rome and Naples, 1840–41. The first note of the Campagna in his diary was as follows:—

> Cisterna, *Jan.* 6 (1841).—Left (Rome) to-day in a pour of rain. . . . Aqueduct looking excessively like the Greenwich railway over the cabbage gardens at Deptford. Then the Campagna began; the ruins along the Appian Way and the tower of Metella on the right crowded together like a desolate city; fragments of other ruins rising out of heaps and mounds of their débris in all parts of the plain. At the end of the first stage, changed horses opposite a long heap of apparent fallen buildings—fragments of their remains still giving character and angle to the east undulations of its outline. A flight of starlings rose from the wild plain and settled along the frieze of a tall arch, still standing, with a group of minor masses hollow against the sky on the highest point. Then came an ancient stone aqueduct—exquisite in colour and mass of form; and shattered throughout, yet keeping towards its mountain termination a continued line; beyond it, the Apeninnes, with fresh snow, shone large through breaking rain-cloud, white fragments of it falling along the Campagna and relieving in places its dark groups of ruin, the Alban Mount looking high through drifting shower. Though we missed the rich glow of colour, I am glad to have seen the Campagna for once under this effect, for it added to its desolation.]

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It will be found, throughout the picture, that the same species of improvement is made on the materials which Claude had ready to his hand. The descending slopes of the city of Rome, towards the pyramid of Caius Cestius, supply not only lines of the most exquisite variety and beauty, but matter for contemplation and reflection in every fragment of their buildings. This passage has been idealized by Claude into a set of similar round towers, respecting which no idea can be formed but that they are uninhabitable, and to which no interest can be attached, beyond the difficulty of conjecturing what they could have been built for. The ruins of the temple are rendered unimpressive by the juxtaposition of the water-mill, and inexplicable by the introduction of the Roman soldiers. The glide of the muddy streams of the melancholy Tiber and Anio through the Campagna is impressive in itself, but altogether ceases to be so, when we disturb their stillness of motion by a weir, adorn their neglected flow with a handsome bridge, and cover their solitary[1] surface with punts, nets, and fishermen.

It cannot, I think, be expected, that landscapes like this should have any effect on the human heart, except to harden or to degrade it; to lead it from the love of what is simple, earnest, and pure, to what is as sophisticated and corrupt in arrangement, as erring and imperfect in detail. So long as such works are held up for imitation, landscape painting must be a manufacture, its productions must be toys, and its patrons must be children.

39. My purpose then, in the present work, is to demonstrate the utter falseness both of the facts and principles; the imperfection of material, and error of arrangement, on which works such as these are based; and to insist on the necessity, as well as the dignity, of an earnest, faithful, loving study of nature as she is, rejecting with abhorrence all that man has done to alter and modify her. And the praise which, in this first portion of the work, is given to many English artists, would be justifiable on this ground only; that, although

[1] [For "solitary," ed. 2 reads "neglected."]

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frequently with little power and with desultory effort, they have yet, in an honest and good heart, received the word of God from clouds, and leaves, and waves, and kept it,* and

* The feelings of Constable with respect to his art might be almost a model for the young student, were it not that they err a little on the other side, and are perhaps in need of chastening and guiding from the works of his fellow-men.[1] We should use pictures not as authorities, but as comments on nature, just as we use divines not as authorities, but as comments on the Bible. Constable, in his dread of saint-worship,[2] deprives himself of much instruction from the Scripture to which he holds, because he will not accept aid in the reading of it from the learning of other men. Sir George Beaumont, on the contrary, furnishes, in the anecdotes given of him in Constable's life, a melancholy instance of the degradation into which the human mind may fall, when it suffers human works to interfere between it and its Master. The recommendation of the colour of an old Cremona fiddle for the prevailing tone of everything, and the vapid inquiry of the conventionalist, "Where do you put your brown tree?" show a prostration of intellect at once so ludicrous and so lamentable, that we believe the student of the gallery can receive no sterner warning than it conveys.[3] Art so followed is the most servile indolence in which life can be wasted. There are then two dangerous extremes to be shunned: forgetfulness of the Scripture, and scorn of the divine; slavery on the one hand, and free-thinking on the other. The mean is nearly as difficult to determine or keep in art as in religion,[4] but the great danger is on the side of superstition. He who walks humbly with Nature will seldom be in danger of losing sight of Art. He will commonly find in all that is truly great of man's works something of their original, for which he will regard them with gratitude and sometimes follow them with respect; while he who takes Art for his authority may entirely lose sight of all that it interprets, and sink at once into the sin of an idolater, and the degradation of a slave.

[1] [Ruskin was thinking, no doubt, of such expressions as the following in one of Constable's Lectures: "The landscape-painter must walk in the fields with an humble mind. No arrogant mind was ever permitted to see nature in all her beauty. If I may be allowed to use a very solemn quotation, I would say most emphatically to the student, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth'" (*Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, by C. R. Leslie, 1845, p. 359). So far did Constable carry his devotion to the book of nature as the landscape-painter's scripture, that he dreaded the formation of a National Gallery. It would bring about, he said, "an end of the art in poor old England, and she will become, in all that relates to painting, as much a nonentity as every other country that has one. The reason is plain; the manufacturers of pictures are then made the criterions of perfection, instead of nature" (*ibid.* p. 105). For a reply to Ruskin's criticisms of Constable's "unteachableness," see C. R. Leslie's *Handbook for Young Painters*, p. 274. For other references to Constable, see below, p. 191, and *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. ix. § 13, ch. x. § 3, and App. i.; vol. iv. ch. iii. § 6, ch. v. § 19; *Academy Notes*, 1859; *Two Paths*, App. i. The anecdotes of Beaumont referred to above are on pp. 124–125 of Leslie's *Memoirs*, etc.]

[2] [Eds. 2, 3, and 4 read, "saint-worship, excommunicates himself from all benefit of the Church, and deprives," etc.]

[3] [For "so ludicrous . . . conveys," eds. 2 and 3 read, "so laughable and lamentable, that they are at once, on all, and to all, students of the gallery, a satire and a warning."]

[4] [For the difficulty in this sort which Ruskin experienced at the time in the matter of religion, see his *Letters to a College Friend*, Vol. I. p. 465.]

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endeavoured in humility to render to the world that purity of impression which can alone render the result of art an instrument of good, or its labour deserving of gratitude.

40. If, however, I shall have frequent occasion to insist on the necessity of this heartfelt love of, and unqualified submission to, the teaching of nature, it will be no less incumbent upon me to reprobate the careless rendering of casual impression, and mechanical copyism of unimportant subject, which are too frequently visible in our modern school.* Their

* I should have insisted more on this fault (for it is a fatal one) in the following Essay, but the cause of it rests rather with the public than with the artist, and in the necessities of the public as much as in their will. Such pictures as artists themselves would wish to paint could not be executed under very high prices; and it must always be easier, in the present state of society, to find ten purchasers for ten-guinea sketches, than one purchaser for a hundred-guinea picture. Still, I have been often both surprised and grieved to see that any effort on the part of our artists to rise above manufacture, any struggle to something like complete conception, was left by the public to be its own reward. In the Water-Colour Exhibition of last year there was a noble work of David Cox's, ideal in the right sense; a forest hollow with a few sheep crushing down through its deep fern, and a solemn opening through the evening sky above its dark masses of distance.[1] It was worth all his little bits on the walls put together. Yet the public picked up all the little bits, blots and splashes, ducks, chick-weed, ears of corn, all that was clever and *petite;* and the real picture, the full development of the artist's mind, was left on his hands. How can I, or any one else with a conscience, advise him after this to aim at anything more than may be struck out by the cleverness of a quarter of an hour? Cattermole, I believe, is earthed and shackled in the same manner. He began his career with finished and studied pictures, which, I believe, never paid him; he now prostitutes his fine talent to the superficialness of public taste, and blots his way to emolument and oblivion. There is commonly, however, fault on both sides, in the artist for exhibiting his dexterity by mountebank tricks of the brush, until chaste finish, requiring ten times the knowledge and labour, appears insipid to the diseased taste which he has himself formed in his patrons, as the roaring and ranting of a common actor will oftentimes render apparently vapid the finished touches of perfect nature; and in the public, for taking less real pains to become acquainted with, and discriminate, the various powers of a great artist, than they would to estimate the excellence of a cook, or develop the dexterity of a dancer.

[1] [For Ruskin's appreciation of David Cox, see below, p. 193 (and *cf.* p. 253, a passage in the first edition); *Letters to a College Friend*, Vol. I. p. 427; and *Academy Notes*, 1856-59. For a later and less favourable notice, see *Lectures on Landscape*, § 80. The work referred to above was No. 199 in the Exhibition of the Old Water-Colour Society—"Sherwood Forest." For George Cattermole (1800–1868), see below, pp. 220, 397 *n.*, 603, and *Notes on Prout and Hunt*, pref., § 28.]

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lightness and desultoriness of intention, their meaningless multiplication of unstudied composition, and their want of definiteness and loftiness of aim, bring discredit on their whole system of study, and encourage in the critic the unhappy prejudice that the field and hill-side are less fit places of study than the gallery and the garret. Not every casual idea caught from the flight of a shower or the fall of a sunbeam, not every glowing fragment of harvest light, nor every flickering dream of copse-wood coolness is to be given to the world as it came, unconsidered, incomplete, and forgotten by the artist as soon as it has left his easel. That only should be considered a picture, in which the spirit, not the materials, observe, but the animating emotion, of many such studies is concentrated and exhibited by the aid of long studied, painfully chosen forms; idealized in the right sense of the word, not by audacious liberty of that faculty of degrading God's works which man calls his "imagination,"[1] but by perfect assertion of entire knowledge of every part and character and function of the object, and in which the details are completed to the last line compatible with the dignity and simplicity of the whole, wrought out with that noblest industry which concentrates profusion into point, and transforms accumulation into structure. Neither must this labour be bestowed on every subject which appears to afford a capability of good, but on chosen subjects in which nature has prepared to the artist's hand the purest sources of the impression he would convey. These may be humble in their order, but they must be perfect of their kind. There is a perfection of the hedgerow and cottage, as well as of the forest and the palace; and more ideality in a great artist's selection and treatment of roadside weeds and brook-worn pebbles, than in all the struggling caricature of the meaner mind, which heaps its foreground with colossal columns, and heaves impossible mountains into the encumbered sky. Finally, these chosen subjects must not be in any way

[1] [*Cf.* Butler's *Analogy* (I. i. § 9, in Gladstone's edition, 1896), where he calls the imagination "that forward, delusive faculty, ever obtruding beyond its sphere; of some assistance, indeed, to apprehension, but the author of all error."]

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repetitions of one another, but each founded on a new idea, and developing a totally distinct train of thought: so that the work of the artist's life should form a consistent series of essays, rising through the scale of creation from the humblest scenery to the most exalted; each picture being a necessary link in the chain, based on what preceded, introducing to what is to follow, and all, in their lovely system, exhibiting and drawing closer the bonds of nature to the human heart.

41. Since, then, I shall have to reprobate the absence of study in the moderns nearly as much as its false direction in the ancients, my task will naturally divide itself into three portions.[1] In the first, I shall endeavour to investigate and arrange the facts of nature with scientific accuracy; showing as I proceed, by what total neglect of the very first base and groundwork of their art the idealities of some among the old masters are produced. This foundation once securely laid, I shall proceed, in the second portion of the work, to analyse and demonstrate the nature of the emotions of the Beautiful and Sublime; to examine the particular characters of every kind of scenery; and to bring to light, as far as may be in my power, that faultless, ceaseless, inconceivable, inexhaustible loveliness, which God has stamped upon all things, if man will only receive them as He gives them. Finally, I shall endeavour to trace the operation of all this on the hearts and minds of men; to exhibit the moral function and end of art; to prove the share which it ought to have in the thoughts, and influence on the lives, of all of us; to attach to the artist the responsibility of a preacher, and to kindle in the general mind that regard which such an office must demand.

It must be evident that the first portion of this task, which is all that I have yet been enabled to offer to the reader, cannot but be the least interesting and the most laborious; especially because it is necessary that it should be executed

[1] [*i.e.* "Ideas of Truth," pt. ii.; "Ideas of Beauty," pts. iii., v.–vii.; "Ideas of Relation," pts. viii., ix.—the threefold division marked out in pt. i. sec. ii. ch. iii. § 6. But subsequently Ruskin's treatment became less methodical. Vol. iii. (pt. iv.) was interpolated, "Of Many Things"; and the analysis of "Ideas of Beauty," in pts. v.–vii. (vols. iv. and v.), covered much the same ground as vol. i.]

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without reference to any principles of beauty or influences of emotion. It is the hard straightforward classification of material things, not the study of thought or passion; and therefore let me not be accused of want of the feelings which I choose to repress. The consideration of the high qualities of art must not be interrupted by the work of the hammer and the eudiometer.[1]

42. Again, I would request that the frequent passages of reference to the great masters of the Italian school may not be looked upon as mere modes of conventional expression. I think there is enough in the following pages to prove that I am not likely to be carried away by the celebrity of a name; and therefore that the devoted love which I profess for the works of the great historical and sacred painters is sincere and well grounded. And indeed every principle of art which I may advocate, I shall be able to illustrate by reference to the works of men universally allowed to be the masters of masters; and the public, so long as my teaching leads them to higher understanding and love of the works of Buonaroti, Leonardo, Raffaelle, Titian, and Cagliari,[2] may surely concede to me, without fear, the right of striking such blows as I may deem necessary to the establishment of my principles, at Gaspar Poussin or Vandevelde.

43. Indeed, I believe there is nearly as much occasion, at the present day, for advocacy of Michael Angelo against the

[1] [An instrument for testing the purity of the air, or rather the quantity of oxygen it contains, now chiefly employed in the analysis of gases. Ruskin's reference to his work in these scientific terms is not merely rhetorical. He wielded the geologist's hammer, and, if he did not use the eudiometer, he carried abroad, to aid him in his study of skies, a cyanometer (see Vol. I. p. xxx.).]

[2] [It is curious at first sight that Ruskin should not here include Tintoret, the interpretation of whom was one of the principal aims of his second volume; presumably he was omitted in this place, as not being one of the "men universally allowed to be the masters of masters." For Ruskin's own list of the greatest masters, as they seemed to him at a later date, see *Elements of Drawing*, App. ii. In a first class, as being "always right," he placed two only of those above named—Titian and Veronese, adding Tintoret, Giorgione, John Bellini, and Velasquez. Leonardo came in a second list, among those with whom "question of right and wrong" is admissible; while Michael Angelo and Raphael are mentioned as among the great ones indeed, but as likely to lead students off the right road. For another list which Ruskin drew up, see Introduction to next volume. In reading Ruskin's later criticisms of Raphael, and still more of Michael Angelo (*e.g.*, in the lecture, *The Relation of Michael Angelo to Tintoret*), these earlier notices should be borne in mind.]

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pettiness of the moderns, as there is for support of Turner against the conventionalities of the ancients. For, though the names of the fathers of sacred art are on all our lips, our faith in them is much like that of the great world in its religion—nominal, but dead. In vain our lecturers sound the name of Raffaelle in the ears of their pupils, while their own works are visibly at variance with every principle deducible from his. In vain is the young student compelled to produce a certain number of school copies of Michael Angelo, when his bread must depend on the number of gewgaws he can crowd into his canvas. And I could with as much zeal exert myself against the modern system of English historical art, as I have in favour of our school of landscape, but that it is an ungrateful and painful task to attack the works of living painters, struggling with adverse circumstances of every kind, and especially with the false taste of a nation which regards matters of art either with the ticklishness of an infant, or the stolidity of a megatherium.

44. I have been accused, in the execution of this first portion of my work, of irreverent and scurrile expression towards the works which I have depreciated.[1] Possibly I may have been in some degree infected by reading those criticisms of our periodicals which consist of nothing else; but I believe, in general, that my words will be found to have sufficient truth in them to excuse their familiarity; and that no other weapons could have been used to pierce the superstitious prejudice with which the works of certain painters are shielded from the attacks of reason. My answer is that given long ago to a similar complaint, uttered under the same circumstances by the foiled sophist:—*Τίς δ' ἔστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὡς ἀπαίδευτός τις, ὃς οὕτω φαῦλα ὀνόματα ὀνομάζειν τολμᾷ ἐν σεμνῷ πράγματι; Τοιοῦτός τις, ὦ Ἱππία, οὐδὲν ἄλλο φροντίζων ἢ τὸ ἀληθές.*[2]

45. It is with more surprise that I have heard myself

[1] [See the passage from the *Art Union Monthly Journal*, quoted above, Introduction, p. xliii.]

[2] [Plato, *Hippias Major*, 288 D. "And who is this man? What an uneducated fellow! who thus presumes to express himself in words so low in an affair so solemn?" "Such is the fellow,—a man who cares for nothing but the truth." For another quotation from this Dialogue, see Appendix ii., p. 649.]

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accused of thoughtless severity with respect to the works of contemporary painters, for I fully believe that whenever I attack them, I give myself far more pain than I can possibly inflict; and in many instances, I have withheld reprobation which I considered necessary to the full understanding of my work, in the fear of grieving or injuring men of whose feelings and circumstances I was ignorant. Indeed, the apparently false and exaggerated bias of the whole book in favour of modern art is, in great degree, dependent on my withholding the animadversions which would have given it balance, and keeping silence where I cannot praise.[1] But I would rather be a year or two longer in effecting my purposes, than reach them by trampling on men's hearts and hearths; and I have permitted myself to express unfavourable opinions only where the popularity and favour of the artist are so great as to render the opinion of an individual a matter of indifference to him.[2]

46. And now, but one word more. For many a year we have heard nothing with respect to the works of Turner but accusations of their want of *truth*. To every observation on their power, sublimity, or beauty, there has been but one reply:

[1] [*Cf.* on this point Ruskin's note cited on p. 195 *n*. In a letter, also, to the *Pall Mall Gazette* (Jan. 11, 1875), Ruskin contrasted "the first volume of *Modern Painters*, which praises many third-rate painters, and teaches none," with "the following volumes, which praise none but good painters, and sometimes admit the weakness of advising bad ones" (*Arrows of the Chace*, ed. 1880, ii. 299).]

[2] [Ed. 2 (only) adds the following note:—

"The disadvantageous prominence given in some of the following pages to Mr. Maclise, was entirely owing to my knowing him to have many friends, and multitudinous admirers, and to my feeling that were his powers exerted in a right direction, he might infinitely elevate and advance our school of art. I am sorry for the harshness with which I have spoken, for it has hurt the feelings of many for whose judgment I have the most true respect; but I have not cancelled the passage because I have not altered my opinion. I cannot help feeling that there is, in many of the creations of Maclise's imagination, a strange character of savage recklessness, which, however striking, animated, and impressive in characters to which it properly belongs, is grievously out of place in anything approaching to ideal subject. I may be entirely wrong in this feeling, but so long as it remains unchanged, I cannot refrain from beseeching Mr. Maclise to devote his vivid imagination and vigorous powers of hand to creations of more tenderness, repose, and dignity; and above all, not to condescend, capable as he is of kindling his canvas with life, and stamping it with character, to spend his time in imitating the sparkle of wine-glasses, and elaborating the fractures of nutshells."

For other references to Maclise, see below, pp. 82, 619; and see also the preface to the first ed., above, p. 5.]

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They are not like nature.[1] I therefore took my opponents on their own ground, and demonstrated, by thorough investigation of actual facts, that Turner *is* like nature, and paints more of nature than any man who ever lived. I expected this proposition (the foundation of all my future efforts) would have been disputed with desperate struggles, and that I should have had to fight my way to my position inch by inch. Not at all. My opponents yield me the field at once. One (the writer for the *Athenæum*) has no other resource than the assertion, that "he disapproves the natural style in painting. If people want to see *nature*, let them go and look at herself. Why should they see her at second-hand on a piece of canvas?"[2] The other (*Blackwood*), still more utterly discomfited, is reduced to a still more remarkable line of defence. "It is not," he says, "what things in all respects really are, but how they are convertible by the mind into what they are *not*, that we have to consider." (October 1843, p. 485.) I leave therefore the reader to choose whether, with *Blackwood* and his fellows, he will proceed to consider how things are convertible by the mind into what they are *not*; or whether, with me, he will undergo the harder, but perhaps on the whole more useful, labour of ascertaining what they are.[3]

[The following Prefaces were contained in those editions only in which they first appeared.]

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

(1846)

It is with much regret, and partly against my own judgment, that I republish the following chapters in their present form. The particular circumstances (stated in the first preface) under which they were originally

[1] [See, for instance, the paper in *Blackwood* in 1836, below, p. 637.]

[2] [*Athenæum*, in its second review of *Modern Painters*, Feb. 10, 1844, No. 850, p. 133.]

[3] [In "The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism" (§ 16), Ruskin referred to the closing words of this preface as an assertion of the principle of realism for the groundwork of all he had to teach in the first volume. "Nevertheless," he added, "the first volume of *Modern Painters* did by no means contain all that even then I knew;" in the third volume he showed that "a faithful realist, before he could question whether his art was representing anything truly, had first to ask whether it meant seriously to represent anything at all."]

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written, have rendered them so unfit for the position they now hold, as introductory to a serious examination of the general functions of art, that I should have wished first to complete the succeeding portions of the essay, and then to write another introduction of more fitting character. But as it may be long before I am able to do this, and as I believe what I have already written may still be of some limited and practical service, I have suffered it to reappear, trusting to the kindness of the reader to look to its intention rather than its tempe and forgive its inconsideration in its earnestness.

Thinking it of too little substance to bear mending, wherever I have found a passage which I thought required modification or explanation, I have cut it out; what I have left, however imperfect, cannot, I think, be dangerously misunderstood: something I have added, not under the idea of rendering the work in any wise systematic or complete, but to supply gross omissions, answer inevitable objections, and give some substance to passages of mere declamation.

Whatever inadequacy or error there may be, throughout, in materials or modes of demonstration, I have no doubt of the truth and necessity of the main result; and though the reader may, perhaps, find me frequently hereafter showing other and better grounds for what is here affirmed, yet the point and bearing of the book, its determined depreciation of Claude, Salvator, Gaspar, and Canaletto, and its equally determined support of Turner, as the greatest of all landscape painters, and of Turner's recent works as his finest, are good and right; and if the prevalence throughout of attack and eulogium be found irksome or offensive, let it be remembered that my object thus far has not been either the establishment or the teaching of any principles of art, but the vindication, most necessary to the prosperity of our present schools, of the uncomprehended rank of their greatest artist, and the diminution, equally necessary, as I think, to the prosperity of our schools, of the unadvised admiration of the landscape of the seventeenth century. For I believe it to be almost impossible to state in terms sufficiently serious and severe the depth and extent of the evil which has resulted (and that not in art alone, but in all matters with which the contemplative faculties are concerned) from the works of those elder men. On the Continent, all landscape art has been utterly annihilated by them, and with it all sense of the power of nature. We in England have only done better because our artists have had strength of mind enough to form a school withdrawn from their influence.

The points are somewhat farther developed in the general sketch of ancient and modern landscape which I have added to the first section of the second part. Some important additions have also been made to the chapters on the painting of the sea. Throughout the rest of the text, though something is withdrawn, little is changed; and the reader may rest assured that if I were now to bestow on this feeble essay the careful revision which it much needs, but little deserves, it would not be to alter its tendencies, or modify its conclusions, but to prevent indignation from appearing virulence on the one side, and enthusiasm partizanship on the other.

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PREFACE TO NEW EDITION

(1873)

I have been lately so often asked by friends on whose judgment I can rely, to permit the publication of another edition of *Modern Painters* in its original form, that I have at last yielded, though with some violence to my own feelings; for many parts of the first and second volumes are written in a narrow enthusiasm, and the substance of their metaphysical and religious speculation is only justifiable on the ground of its absolute honesty.[1] Of the third, fourth, and fifth volumes, I indeed mean eventually to rearrange what I think of permanent interest for the complete edition of my works, but with fewer and less elaborate illustrations; nor have I any serious grounds for refusing to allow the book once more to appear in the irregular form which it took as it was written, since of the art-teaching and landscape descriptions it contains I have little to retrench, and nothing to retract.

This final edition must, however, be limited to a thousand copies, for some of the more delicate plates are already worn—that of the Mill Stream in the fifth volume, and of the Loire Side very injuriously; while that of the Shores of Wharfe had to be retouched by an engraver after the removal of the mezzotint for reprinting. But Mr. Armytage's, Mr. Cousens', and Mr. Cuff's magnificent plates are still in good state; and my own etchings, though injured, are still good enough to answer their purpose.

I sign with my own hand this preface to every copy, thus certifying it as containing the best impressions of the original plates now producible, and belonging to the last edition of the book in its complete form.[2]

John Ruskin

[1] [*Cf.* for other references to what Ruskin in after years called the "rabid Protestantism" of his early essays, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, pref. to ed. of 1880, and *Sesame and Lilies*, pref. to ed. of 1871.]

[2] [On the subject of this preface, see Introduction, p. l., and Bibliographical Note, p. lix.]

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PART I

OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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SECTION I

OF THE NATURE OF THE IDEAS CONVEYABLE BY ART

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

§ 1. Public opinion no criterion of excellence, except after long periods of time.

If it be true, and it can scarcely be disputed, that nothing has been for centuries consecrated by public admiration, without possessing in a high degree some kind of sterling excellence,[1] it is not because the average intellect and feeling of the majority of the public are competent in any way to distinguish what is really excellent, but because all erroneous opinion is inconsistent, and all ungrounded opinion transitory; so that, while the fancies and feelings which deny deserved honour, and award what is undue, have neither root nor strength sufficient to maintain consistent testimony for a length of time, the opinions formed on right grounds by those few who are in reality competent judges, being necessarily stable, communicate themselves gradually from mind to mind; descending lower as they extend wider, until they leaven the whole lump, and rule by absolute authority, even where the grounds and reasons for them cannot be understood. On this gradual victory of what is consistent over what is vacillating, depends the reputation of all that is highest in art and literature; for it is an insult to what is really great in either to suppose that it in any way addresses itself to mean or uncultivated faculties. It is a matter of the simplest demonstration, that no man can

[1] [See above, preface to 2nd ed., § 9; and below, Appendix ii., p. 648, where Ruskin enters more fully into the question of public opinion.]

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be really appreciated but by his equal or superior. His inferior may over-estimate him, in enthusiasm; or, as is more commonly the case, degrade him, in ignorance; but he cannot form a grounded and just estimate. Without proving this, however, which would take more space to do than I can spare, it is sufficiently evident that there is no process of amalgamation by which opinions, wrong individually, can become right merely by their multitude.* If I stand by a picture in the Academy, and hear twenty persons in succession admiring some paltry piece of mechanism or imitation in the lining of a cloak, or the satin of a slipper, it is absurd to tell me that they reprobate collectively what they admire individually; or, if they pass with apathy by a piece of the most noble conception or most perfect truth, because it has in it no tricks of the brush nor grimace of expression, it is absurd to tell me that they collectively respect what they separately scorn, or that the feelings and knowledge of such judges, by any length of time or comparison of ideas, could come to any right conclusion with respect to what is really high in art. The question is not decided by them, but for them; decided at first by few:[1] by fewer in proportion as the merits of the work are of a higher order. From these few the decision is communicated to the number next below them in rank of mind, and by these again to a wider and lower circle; each rank being so far cognizant of the superiority of that above it, as to receive its decision with respect; until in process of time, the right and consistent opinion is communicated to all, and held by all as a matter of faith, the more positively in proportion as the grounds of it are less perceived.†

* The opinion of a majority is right only when it is more probable, with each individual, that he should be right than that he should be wrong, as in the case of a jury. Where it is more probable, with respect to each individual, that he should be wrong than right, the opinion of the minority is the true one. Thus it is in art.[2]

† There are, however, a thousand modifying circumstances which render this process sometimes unnecessary,—sometimes rapid and certain,—sometimes

[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin shortens this passage thus:—"The question of excellence is decided at first by few."]

[2] [This note is erased by Ruskin in his copy for revision.]

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But when this process has taken place, and the work has become sanctified by time in the minds of men, it is impossible that any new work of equal merit can be impartially compared with it, except by minds not only educated and generally capable of appreciating merit, but strong enough to shake off the weight of prejudice and association, which invariably incline them to the older favourite. It is much easier, says Barry, to repeat the

§ 2. *And therefore obstinate when once formed.*

impossible. It is unnecessary in rhetoric and the drama, because the multitude is the only proper judge of those arts whose end is to move the multitude (though more is necessary to a fine play than is essentially dramatic, and it is only of the dramatic part that the multitude are cognizant). It is unnecessary, when, united with the higher qualities of a work, there are appeals to universal passion, to all the faculties and feelings which are general in man as an animal. The popularity is then as sudden as it is well-grounded, —it is hearty and honest in every mind, but it is based in every mind on a different species of excellence. Such will often be the case with the noblest works of literature. Take Don Quixote for example.[1] The lowest mind would find in it perpetual and brutal amusement in the misfortunes of the knight, and perpetual pleasure in sympathy with the squire. A mind of average feeling would perceive the satirical meaning and force of the book, would appreciate its wit, its elegance, and its truth. But only elevated and peculiar minds discover, in addition to all this, the full moral beauty of the love and truth which are the constant associates of all that is even most weak and erring in the character of its hero, and pass over the rude adventure and scurrile jest in haste—perhaps in pain, to penetrate beneath the rusty corselet, and catch from the wandering glance, the evidence and expression of fortitude, self-devotion, and universal love. So again, with the works of Scott and Byron: popularity was as instant as it was deserved, because there is in them an appeal to those passions which are universal in all men, as well as an expression of such thoughts as can be received only by the few. But they are admired by the majority of their advocates for the weakest parts of their works, as a popular preacher by the majority of his congregation for the worst part of his sermon.

The process is rapid and certain, when, though there may be little to catch the multitude at once, there is much which they can enjoy when their attention is authoritatively directed to it. So rests the reputation of Shakspeare. No ordinary mind can comprehend wherein his undisputed superiority consists, but there is yet quite as much to amuse, thrill, or excite,—quite as much of what is in the strict sense of the word, dramatic, in his works as in any one's else. They were received, therefore, when first written, with average approval, as works of common merit: but when the high decision was made, and the circle spread, the public took up the hue and cry conscientiously enough. Let them have daggers, ghosts, clowns, and kings, and, with such real and definite sources of enjoyment, they will take the additional

[1] [It is worth noticing that the three authors cited in this paragraph—Cervantes, Scott, and Byron—were those with whom Ruskin was early acquainted from his father reading them to him aloud: see *Præterita*, i. §§ 1, 68, 163.]

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character recorded of Phidias, than to investigate the merits of Agasias.[1] And when, as peculiarly in the case of painting, much knowledge of what is technical and practical is necessary to a right judgment, so that those alone are competent to

trouble to learn half a dozen quotations, without understanding them, and admit the superiority of Shakspeare without further demur. Nothing, perhaps, can more completely demonstrate the total ignorance of the public of all that is great or valuable in Shakspeare than their universal admiration of Maclise's Hamlet.[2]

The process is impossible where there is in the work nothing to attract and something to disgust the vulgar mind. Neither their intrinsic excellence, nor the authority of those who can judge of it, will ever make the poems of Wordsworth or George Herbert popular, in the sense in which Scott and Byron are popular, because it is to the vulgar a labour instead of a pleasure to read them; and there are parts in them which to such judges cannot but be vapid or ridiculous. Most works of the highest art,—those of Raffaelle, M. Angelo, or Da Vinci,—stand as Shakspeare does,—that which is commonplace and feeble in their excellence being taken for its essence by the uneducated imagination assisting the impression (for we readily fancy that we feel, when feeling is a matter of pride or conscience), and affectation and pretension increasing the noise of the rapture, if not its degree. Giotto, Orcagna, Angelico,[3] Perugino, stand, like George Herbert,[4] only with the few. Wilkie becomes popular, like Scott, because he touches passions which all feel, and expresses truths which all can recognize.[5]

---

[1] ["When the different walks of art have been successfully filled by great men whose reputations have been chronicled and established by time, succeeding artists, though of equal merit, will in the same country be with difficulty allowed the full praise they deserve, especially by the second-hand critics who generally draw a line of separation between the old occupiers of reputation and the new-comers; since it is much easier to repeat the character that is recorded of Phidias, Praxiteles, or Lysippus, than to investigate the merits of an Apollonius or an Agasias" (*The Works of James Barry*, 1809, i. 368). Apollonius was the sculptor of the Torso of the Vatican much admired by Ruskin: see below, p. 608; Agasias, of the "Borghese Gladiator" in the Louvre (for which see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xiv. § 29). For Ruskin's appreciation of Barry's *Lectures*, see Vol. I. p. 491.]

[2] [Exhibited at the Royal Academy in the year 1842; now No. 422 in the Tate Gallery. For other references to Maclise, see above, p. 51 *n.*; and below, p. 619 *n.*; also *Academy Notes*, 1855, 1857. It should be remembered that the critics who were most scornful of Turner were also rapturous over Maclise's "Hamlet." Thus the *Athenæum* (No. 758, p. 409), after a column of praise of the painter's "fertility of imagination," "facility of hand," and "luxuriance of fancy," regretted that it had not available another column "to fill with separate portions worthy of praise and enumeration." Similarly, the *Literary Gazette* (No. 1320, p. 316) said: "This is the picture which attracts a never-failing crowd around it; and well does the genius it displays deserve such homage. In execution it is marvellous. Never was scene more potently filled. Shakspeare is on the canvas in all his imagination and might. It would require a page of our journal merely to enumerate its striking points." *Blackwood* (July 1842, p. 28), while admitting some defects, pronounced the picture the most striking in the exhibition, and as evincing "great genius" on the part of its "poet painter."]

[3] [For "Orcagna, Angelico," eds. 1 and 2 read, "Cimabue, Fra Bartolomeo."]

[4] [For Ruskin's admiration of George Herbert, see Vol. I. p. 409 *n.*, and the other references there supplied.]

[5] [For other references to Wilkie, see Vol. I. p. 7 *n.*, and below, ch. ii. § 7 *n.*]

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pronounce a true verdict who are themselves the persons to be judged, and who therefore can give no opinion, centuries may elapse before fair comparison can be made between two artists of different ages: while the patriarchal excellence exercises during the interval a tyrannical, perhaps even a blighting, influence over the minds, both of the public and of those to whom, properly understood, it should serve for a guide and example. In no city of Europe where art is a subject of attention, are its prospects so hopeless, or its pursuits so resultless, as in Rome; because there, among all students, the authority of their predecessors in art is supreme and without appeal, and the mindless copyist studies Raffaelle, but not what Raffaelle studied.[1] It thus becomes the duty of every one capable of demonstrating any definite points of superiority in modern art, and who is in a position in which his doing so will not be ungraceful, to encounter without hesitation whatever opprobrium may fall upon him from the necessary prejudice even of the most candid minds, and from the far more virulent opposition of those who have no hope of maintaining their own reputation for discernment but in the support of that kind of consecrated merit which may be applauded without an inconvenient necessity for reasons. It is my purpose, therefore, believing that there are certain points of superiority in modern artists, and especially in one or two of their number, which have not yet been fully understood, except by those who are scarcely in a position admitting the declaration of their conviction, to institute a close comparison between the great works of ancient and modern landscape art; to raise, as far as possible, the deceptive veil of imaginary light through which we are accustomed to gaze upon the patriarchal work; and to show the real relations, whether favourable or otherwise, subsisting between it and our own. I am fully aware that this is not to be done lightly or rashly; that it is the part of every one proposing to undertake such a task, strictly to examine, with prolonged doubt and severe trial, every opinion in any way

§ 3. The author's reasons for opposing it in particular instances.

[1] [This sentence—a generalisation from Ruskin's visit to Roman studios in the winter of 1840–41—is struck out in his copy for revision.]

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contrary to the sacred verdict of time, and to advance nothing which does not, at least in his own conviction, rest on surer ground than mere feeling or taste. I have accordingly advanced nothing in the following pages but with accompanying demonstration, which may indeed be true or false—complete or conditional, but which can only be met on its own grounds, and can in no way be borne down or affected by mere authority of great names. Yet even thus I should scarcely have ventured to speak so decidedly as I have, but for my full conviction that we ought not to class the historical painters of the fifteenth, and landscape painters of the seventeenth, centuries together, under the general title of "old masters," as if they possessed anything like corresponding rank in their respective walks of art. I feel assured that the principles on which they worked are totally opposed, and that the landscape painters have been honoured only because they exhibited, in mechanical and technical qualities, some semblance of the manner of the nobler historical painters, whose principles of conception and composition they entirely reversed. The course of study which has led me reverently to the feet of Michael Angelo and Da Vinci, has alienated me gradually from Claude and Gaspar; I cannot, at the same time, do homage to power and pettiness—to the truth of consummate science, and the mannerism of undisciplined imagination.[1] And let it[2] be understood that whenever

§ 4. But only on points capable of demonstration.

[1] [Ed. 1 here inserted the following passage:—

"And let it be that in all questions respecting the art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we ought not to class the historical and landscape painters together, as possessing anything like equal rank in their respective walks of art. It is because I look with the most devoted veneration upon M. Angelo, Raffaelle, and Da Vinci, that I do not distrust the principles which induce me to look with contempt on Claude, Salvator, and Gaspar Poussin. Had I disliked all, I should have believed in and bowed before all; but in my admiration of the greater, I consider myself as having warrant for the repudiation of the less. I feel assured that they cannot with reason be admired together,—that the principles of art on which they worked are totally opposed, and that the landscape painters of the old school have been honoured only because they had in them a shadow and semblance of the manner of the nobler historical painters, whose principles in all points they directly reversed. But be this as it may, let it be understood . . ."

In Ruskin's copy for revision the sentence in the text—"The course of study . . . imagination"—is struck out. For his earlier view of Claude, see Vol. I. p. 112.]

[2] [In his copy for revision Ruskin here inserts "therefore," and, two lines lower

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hereafter I speak depreciatingly of the old masters as a body, I refer to none of the historical painters, for whom I entertain a veneration which, though I hope reasonable in its grounds, is almost superstitious in degree. Neither, unless he be particularly mentioned, do I intend to include Nicholas Poussin, whose landscapes have a separate and elevated character, which renders it necessary to consider them apart from all others. Speaking generally of the elder masters, I refer only to Claude, Gaspar Poussin, Salvator Rosa, Cuyp, Berghem, Both, Ruysdael, Hobbima, Teniers (in his landscapes), P. Potter, Canaletto, and the various Van somethings and Back somethings, more especially and malignantly those who have libelled the sea.[1]

It will of course be necessary for me, in the commencement of the work, to state briefly those principles on which I conceive all right judgment of art must be founded. These introductory chapters I should wish to be read carefully, because all criticism must be useless when the terms or grounds of it are in any degree ambiguous; and the ordinary language of connoisseurs and critics, granting that they understand it themselves, is usually mere jargon to others, from their custom of using technical terms, by which everything is meant and nothing is expressed.

§ 5. The author's partiality to modern works excusable.

And if, in the application of these principles, in spite of my endeavour to render it impartial, the feeling and fondness which I have for some works of modern art escape me sometimes where they should not, let it be pardoned as little more than a fair counterbalance to that peculiar veneration with which the work of the old master, associated as it has ever been in our ears with the expression of whatever is great or perfect, must be usually regarded by the reader. I do not say that this veneration is wrong, nor that we should be less attentive to the repeated words of time: but let us not forget that if

down, italicizes *none*. Similarly, lower down still, he inserts before Claude, etc., the words "the landscape painters."]

[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin tones down this often-quoted phrase into "the various Dutch painters of marine."]

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honour be for the dead, gratitude can only be for the living. He who has once stood beside the grave, to look back upon the companionship which has been for ever closed, feeling how impotent *there* are the wild love and the keen sorrow, to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart, which can only be discharged to the dust. But the lesson which men receive as individuals, they do not learn as nations. Again and again they have seen their noblest descend into the grave, and have thought it enough to garland the tombstone when they had not crowned the brow, and to pay the honour to the ashes which they had denied to the spirit. Let it not displease them that they are bidden, amidst the tumult and the dazzle of their busy life, to listen for the few voices, and watch for the few lamps, which God has toned and lighted to charm and to guide them, that they may not learn their sweetness by their silence, nor their light by their decay.[1]

[1] [This paragraph, from "He who has once stood," etc., to the end, is printed in *Frondes Agrestes*, § 84. Ruskin read the passage in his Oxford course—"Readings in *Modern Painters*," and compared it, to its disadvantage, with a passage from *Unto this Last*. It was a true saying, he said, and sincere, but he had in fact "never so stood beside his dead"; if he had, "he would never, in speaking of the time, have studied how to put three 'd's' one after the other, in 'debt,' 'discharged,' and 'dust.'"]

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CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF GREATNESS IN ART

In the 15th Lecture of Sir Joshua Reynolds, incidental notice is taken of the distinction between those excellences in the painter which belong to him *as such*, and those which belong to him in common with all men of intellect, the general and exalted powers of which art is the evidence and expression, not the subject. But the distinction is not there dwelt upon as it should be, for it is owing to the slight attention ordinarily paid to it, that criticism is open to every form of coxcombry, and liable to every phase of error. It is a distinction on which depend all sound judgment of the rank of the artist, and all just appreciation of the dignity of art.

§ 1. *Distinction between the painter's intellectual power and technical knowledge.*

Painting, or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing. He who has learned what is commonly considered the whole art of painting, that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully, has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed. He has done just as much towards being that which we ought to respect as a great painter, as a man who has learnt how to express himself grammatically and melodiously has towards being a great poet. The language is, indeed, more difficult of acquirement in the one case than in the other, and possesses more power of delighting the sense, while it speaks to the intellect; but it is, nevertheless, nothing more than language, and all those excellences which are peculiar to the painter as such, are

§ 2. *Painting, as such, is nothing more than language.*

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merely what rhythm, melody, precision, and force are in the words of the orator and the poet, necessary to their greatness, but not the tests of their greatness. It is not by the mode of representing and saying, but by what is represented and said, that the respective greatness either of the painter or the writer is to be finally determined.[1]

§ 3. *"Painter," a term corresponding to "versifier."*

Speaking with strict propriety, therefore, we should call a man a great painter only as he excelled in precision and force in the language of lines, and a great versifier, as he excelled in precision and force in the language of words. A great poet would then be a term strictly, and in precisely the same sense, applicable to both, if warranted by the character of the images or thoughts which each in their respective languages conveyed.

§ 4. *Example in a painting of E. Landseer's.*

Take, for instance, one of the most perfect poems or pictures (I use the words as synonymous) which modern times have seen:—the "Old Shepherd's Chief-mourner."[2] Here the exquisite execution of the glossy and crisp hair of the dog, the bright sharp touching of the green bough beside it, the clear[3] painting of the wood of

[1] [This is perhaps one of "many passages" in the volume to which Ruskin afterwards referred as "setting the subject or motive of the picture so much above the mode of its execution, that some of my more feebly gifted disciples supposed they were fulfilling my wishes by choosing exactly the subjects for painting which they were least able to paint." "It was long," he said elsewhere, "before I myself understood the true meaning of the pride of the greatest men in their mere execution. . . . Inferior artists are continually trying to escape from the necessity of sound work, and either indulging themselves in their delights in subject, or pluming themselves on their noble motives for attempting what they cannot perform; . . . whereas the great men always understand at once that the first morality of a painter, as of everybody else, is to know his business." Yet though Ruskin felt that he had been "provoked" too far into "the exclusive assertion" of his proposition—that subject was principal, and technique the means of expression, yet to the truth of the proposition itself he constantly adhered. "The principle itself," he said, "I maintain, now in advanced life, with more reverence and firmness than in earliest youth; and though I believe that among the teachers who have opposed its assertion, there are few who enjoy the mere artifices of composition or dexterities of handling so much as I, the time which I have given to the investigation of these has only farther assured me that the pictures were noblest which compelled me to forget them" (*Lectures on Art*, § 74; *Eagle's Nest*, §§ 41–42).]

[2] [Exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1837. Now in the Victoria and Albert South Kensington Museum, Sheepshanks Collection. For other references to Sir Edwin Landseer, see above, Introduction, p. xlvi.; and *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iv. § 11 *n.*; vol. v. pt. ix. ch. vi. § 20; *Academy Notes*, 1856–58; *Pre-Raphaelitism*, § 29.]

[3] [So in all the editions of the book; the MS., however (see facsimile), has "clever," and it would seem that the word "clear" is an original, and never corrected, misprint.]

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clear painting ~~& perspective~~ of the wood of the Coffin & the folds of the blanket
the language - language clear & expressive in the highest degree -
But the close pressure of the dog's breast against the wood - the circumlocution
thing of the paws with which it has dragged the blanket off the coffin -
the utter powerlessness & weight of the head ~~which~~ it laid close and
motionless upon the lid - the fixed & tearful pall of the eye in its utter
hopelessness - the rigidly of repose which marks that there has been
no motion nor change in the trance of agony since the body was left there
& that there will be none until it is borne away - these are all Thoughts.
By these the picture is separated from ~~thousands~~ hundreds of equal
merit as far as painting goes - by these it ranks as a work of the highest
art, and stamps its author - not as the mere imitator of what a ~~spectacle~~ the eye of the head
but as the Man of Mind.

It is not however, always easy, either in painting or literature, to determine
4. Vol 2. Page 1. down to "Poetry" something of it"
This caution in distinguishing between what is decorative and what is
expressive is peculiarly necessary ~~from~~ in painting. For in the language
of words, it is ~~nearly~~ impossible for that which is not expressive to be beautiful
except by the low & slight quality of mere rhythm or melody, any verse
to which is immediately any meaning is at once. But the beauty of the language in

But the ~~loneliness~~ quietness & gloom of the Chamber - the spectacles marking the place
where the Book was last closed - indicating how long the life - how suddenly
the departure - of Him who is now laid solitary in his sleep - but for One

FACSIMILE OF A PAGE OF AN EARLY DRAFT OF "MODERN PAINTERS," VOL. I
(Pt. i. sec. i. ch. ii. § 4)

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the coffin and the folds of the blanket, are language—language clear and expressive in the highest degree. But the close pressure of the dog's breast against the wood, the convulsive clinging of the paws, which has dragged the blanket off the trestle, the total powerlessness of the head laid, close and motionless, upon its folds, the fixed and tearful fall of the eye in its utter hopelessness, the rigidity of repose which marks that there has been no motion nor change in the trance of agony since the last blow was struck on the coffin-lid, the quietness and gloom of the chamber, the spectacles marking the place where the Bible was last closed, indicating how lonely has been the life, how unwatched the departure, of him who is now laid solitary in his sleep;—these are all thoughts—thoughts by which the picture is separated at once from hundreds of equal merit, as far as mere painting goes, by which it ranks as a work of high art, and stamps its author, not as the neat imitator of the texture of a skin, or the fold of a drapery, but as the Man of Mind.

§ 5. Difficulty of fixing an exact limit between language and thought.

It is not, however, always easy, either in painting or literature, to determine where the influence of language stops, and where that of thought begins. Many thoughts are so dependent upon the language in which they are clothed, that they would lose half their beauty if otherwise expressed. But the highest thoughts are those which are least dependent on language, and the dignity of any composition, and praise to which it is entitled, are in exact proportion to its independency of language or expression. A composition is indeed usually most perfect, when to such intrinsic dignity is added all that expression can do to attract and adorn; but in every case of supreme excellence this all becomes as nothing. We are more gratified by the simplest lines or words which can suggest the idea in its own naked beauty, than by the robe and the gem which conceal while they decorate; we are better pleased to feel by their absence how little they could bestow, than by their presence how much they can destroy.

There is therefore a distinction to be made between what

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is ornamental in language and what is expressive. That part of it which is necessary to the embodying and conveying of the thought is worthy of respect and attention as necessary to excellence, though not the test of it. But that part of it which is decorative has little more to do with the intrinsic excellence of the picture than the frame or the varnishing of it. And this caution in distinguishing between the ornamental and the expressive is peculiarly necessary in painting; for in the language of words it is nearly impossible for that which is not expressive to be beautiful, except by mere rhythm or melody, any sacrifice to which is immediately stigmatized as error. But the beauty of mere language in painting is not only very attractive and entertaining to the spectator, but requires for its attainment no small exertion of mind and devotion of time by the artist. Hence, in art, men have frequently fancied that they were becoming rhetoricians and poets when they were only learning to speak melodiously, and the judge has over and over again advanced to the honour of authors those who were never more than ornamental writing-masters.[1]

§ 6. Distinction between decorative and expressive language.

Most pictures of the Dutch school, for instance, excepting always those of Rubens, Vandyke, and Rembrandt, are ostentatious exhibitions of the artist's power of speech, the clear and vigorous elocution of useless and senseless words; while the early efforts of Cimabue and Giotto are the burning messages of prophecy, delivered by the stammering lips of infants. It is not by ranking the former as more than mechanics, or the latter as less than artists, that the taste of the multitude, always awake to the lowest pleasures which art can bestow, and blunt to the highest, is to be formed or elevated. It must be the part of the judicious critic carefully to distinguish what is language, and what is thought, and to rank and praise pictures chiefly for the latter, considering the former as a totally inferior

§ 7. Instance in the Dutch and early Italian schools.

[1] [Ruskin in his copy for revision made the following note on § 6:—
"This entire paragraph is exaggerated and in many respects false. I should gladly have omitted it, but I think it just, when I have been in error, to show clearly to what extent."]

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excellence, and one which cannot be compared with nor weighed against thought in any way, or in any degree whatsoever. The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and a better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed. No weight, nor mass nor beauty of execution, can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought. Three penstrokes of Raffaelle are a greater and a better picture than the most finished work that ever Carlo Dolci polished into inanity.[1] A finished work of a great artist is only better than its sketch, if the sources of pleasure belonging to colour and realization—valuable in themselves—are so employed as to increase the impressiveness of the thought. But if one atom of thought has vanished, all colour, all finish, all execution, all ornament, are too dearly bought. Nothing but thought can pay for thought, and the instant that the increasing refinement or finish of the picture begins to be paid for by the loss of the faintest shadow of an idea, that instant all refinement or finish is an excrescence and a deformity.

§ 8. *Yet there are certain ideas belonging to language itself.*

Yet although in all our speculations on art, language is thus to be distinguished from, and held subordinate to, that which it conveys, we must still remember that there are certain ideas inherent in language itself, and that, strictly speaking, every pleasure connected with art has in it some reference to the intellect. The mere sensual pleasure of the eye, received from the most brilliant piece of colouring, is as nothing to that which it receives from a crystal prism, except as it depends on our perception of a certain meaning and intended arrangement of colour, which has been the subject of intellect. Nay, the term idea, according to Locke's definition of it, will extend even to the sensual impressions themselves as far as they are "things

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 insert:—

"A pencil scratch of Wilkie's on the back of a letter is a great and a better picture—and I use the term picture in its full sense—than the most laboured and luminous canvas that ever left the easel of Gerard Dow. A finished," etc.

For other references to Carlo Dolci, see below, sec. ii. ch. ii. § 9 *n.*, p. 126; *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. ix. § 7.]

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which the mind occupies itself about in thinking;"[1] that is, not as they are felt by the eye only, but as they are received by the mind through the eye. So that, if I say that the greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind of the spectator the greatest number of the greatest ideas, I have a definition which will include as subjects of comparison every pleasure which art is capable of conveying. If I were to say, on the contrary, that the best picture was that which most closely imitated nature, I should assume that art could only please by imitating nature; and I should cast out of the pale of criticism those parts of works of art which are not imitative, that is to say, intrinsic beauties of colour and form, and those works of art wholly, which, like the Arabesques of Raffaelle in the Loggias,[2] are not imitative at all. Now, I want a definition of art wide enough to include all its varieties of aim. I do not say, therefore, that the art is greatest which gives most pleasure, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to teach, and not to please. I do not say that the art is greatest which teaches us most, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to please, and not to teach. I do not say that the art is greatest which imitates best, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to create and not to imitate. But I say that the art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received.

§ 9. *The definition.*

If this, then, be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas.

[1] [*An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, book ii. ch. i.]

[2] [For another reference to the arabesques with which Raphael decorated the Loggia of the Vatican, see below, pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. § 22, p. 198.]

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CHAPTER III

OF IDEAS OF POWER

THE definition of art which I have just given requires me to determine what kinds of ideas can be received from works of art, and which of these are the greatest, before proceeding to any practical application of the test.

§ 1. What classes of ideas are conveyable by art.

I think that all the sources of[1] pleasure, or of any other good, to be derived from works of art, may be referred to five distinct heads.[2]

I. Ideas of Power.—The perception or conception of the mental or bodily powers by which the work has been produced.

II. Ideas of Imitation.—The perception that the thing produced resembles something else.

III. Ideas of Truth.—The perception of faithfulness in a statement of facts by the thing produced.

IV. Ideas of Beauty.—The perception of beauty, either in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles.

V. Ideas of Relation.—The perception of intellectual relations in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles.

I shall briefly distinguish the nature and effects of each of these classes of ideas.

[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin here inserts the word "ideal," and lower down he corrects to "I shall briefly *endeavour to* distinguish." For a description of his proposed rearrangement of this part of the volume, see Appendix v., p. 683.]

[2] [In his Oxford "Readings in *Modern Painters*" Ruskin referred to this elaborate systematization as "affected and forced." "Now," he said, "I should say quite plainly—a picture must, first, be well painted; secondly, must be a true representation; thirdly, must be of a pretty thing; fourthly, must be of a pretty thing which there was some rational and interesting cause for painting."]

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I. Ideas of Power.[1]—These are the simple perception of the mental or bodily powers exerted in the production of any work of art. According to the dignity and degree of the power perceived is the dignity of the idea; but the whole class of ideas is received by the intellect, and they excite the best of the moral feelings, veneration, and the desire of exertion. As a species, therefore, they are one of the noblest connected with art; but the differences in degree of dignity among themselves are infinite, being correspondent with every order of power,—from that of the fingers to that of the most exalted intellect. Thus, when we see an Indian's paddle carved from the handle to the blade, we have a conception of prolonged manual labour,[2] and are gratified in proportion to the supposed expenditure of time and exertion. These are, indeed, powers of a low order, yet the pleasure arising from the conception of them enters very largely into our admiration of all elaborate ornament, architectural decoration, etc. The delight with which we look on the fretted front of Rouen Cathedral[3] depends in no small degree on the simple perception of time employed and labour expended in its production.*[4] But it is a right, that is, an ennobling pleasure, even in this its lowest phase; and even the pleasure felt by those persons who praise a drawing for its

§ 2. Ideas of power vary much in relative dignity.

* *Vide* Appendix 17 to *Stones of Venice*, vol. i.[5]

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[1] [In an early draft of this chapter, Ruskin commenced the discussion of Ideas of Power as follows:—

> "These I have defined to be the conception of the powers mental or bodily necessary to the production of any work of art. The conception of a power is not less productive of pleasure than the contemplation of a perfection or beauty, and it is often more elevating. Alceste, in the *Misanthrope*, says impatiently of the sonnet of Orontes, 'Voyons, monsieur, le temps ne fait rien à l'affaire.' This is not true in works of art, though it is of poetry."

In re-writing the present passage, Ruskin utilised his quotation from Molière elsewhere; see below, sec. ii. ch. ii. § 2, p. 122.]

[2] [Ruskin in his copy for revision has here inserted the words "with some subtlety of barbaric taste."]

[3] [Seen and sketched by Ruskin in his tour of 1835; see Vol. II. pp. 400, 430.]

[4] [For further discussion of "ideas of power" in architecture, see *Seven Lamps*, ch. i. ("The Lamp of Sacrifice," § 11).]

[5] [This footnote was added in ed. 5 (1851).]

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"finish" or its "work," which is one precisely of the same kind, would be right, if it did not imply a want of perception of the higher powers which render work unnecessary. If to the evidence of labour be added that of strength or dexterity, the sensation of power is yet increased; if to strength and dexterity be added that of ingenuity and judgment, it is multiplied tenfold; and so on, through all the subjects of action of body or mind, we receive the more exalted pleasure from the more exalted power.

§ 3. But are received from whatever has been the subject of power. The meaning of the word "excellence."

So far the nature and effects of ideas of power cannot but be admitted by all. But the circumstance which I wish especially to insist upon, with respect to them, is one which may not, perhaps, be so readily allowed, namely, that they are independent of the nature or worthiness of the object from which they are received; and that whatever has been the subject of a great power, whether there be intrinsic and apparent worthiness in itself or not, bears with it the evidence of having been so, and is capable of giving the ideas of power, and the consequent pleasures in their full degree. For observe, that a thing is not properly said to have been the result of a great power, on which only some part of that power has been expended. A nut may be cracked by a steam-engine, but it has not, in being so, been the subject of the power of the engine. And thus it is falsely said of great men, that they waste their lofty powers on unworthy objects: the object may be dangerous or useless, but, as far as the phrase has reference to difficulty of performance, it cannot be unworthy of the power which it brings into exertion, because nothing can become a subject of action to a greater power which can be accomplished by a less, any more than bodily strength can be exerted where there is nothing to resist it.

So then, men may let their great powers lie dormant, while they employ their mean and petty powers on mean and petty objects; but it is physically impossible to employ a great power, except on a great object. Consequently, wherever

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power of any kind or degree has been exerted, the marks and evidence of it are stamped upon its results: it is impossible that it should be lost or wasted, or without record, even in the "estimation of a hair;" and therefore, whatever has been the subject of a great power bears about with it the image of that which created it,[1] and is what is commonly called "excellent." And this is the true meaning of the word Excellent, as distinguished from the terms, "beautiful," "useful," "good," etc.; and we shall always, in future, use the word excellent, as signifying that the thing to which it is applied required a great power for its production.*

§ 4. What is necessary to the distinguishing of excellence.

The faculty of perceiving what powers are required for the production of a thing, is the faculty of perceiving excellence. It is this faculty in which men, even of the most cultivated taste, must always be wanting, unless they have added practice to reflection; because none can estimate the power manifested in victory, unless they have personally measured the strength to be overcome. Though, therefore, it is possible, by the cultivation of sensibility and judgment, to become capable of distinguishing what is beautiful, it is totally impossible, without practice and knowledge, to distinguish or feel what is excellent. The beauty or the truth of Titian's flesh-tint may be appreciated by all; but it is only to the artist, whose multiplied hours of

* Of course the word "excellent" is primarily a mere synonyme with "surpassing," and when applied to persons, has the general meaning given by Johnson—"the state of abounding in any good quality." But when applied to things it has always reference to the power by which they are produced. We talk of excellent music or poetry, because it is difficult to compose or write such, but never of excellent flowers, because all flowers being the result of the same power, must be equally excellent. We distinguish them only as beautiful or useful, and therefore, as there is no other one word to signify that quality of a thing produced by which it pleases us merely as the result of power, and as the term "excellent" is more frequently used in this sense than in any other, I choose to limit it at once to this sense, and I wish it, when I use it in future, to be so understood.

[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin here compresses this passage. He strikes out the footnote, and for the passage "and is what is commonly . . . its production," substitutes "—marvellous in power, and excellent in working."]

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toil have not reached the slightest resemblance of one of its tones, that its *excellence* is manifest.

Wherever, then, difficulty has been overcome, there is excellence; and therefore, in order to prove a work excellent, we have only to prove the difficulty of its production; whether it be useful or beautiful is another question; its excellence depends on its difficulty alone.[1] Nor is it a false or diseased taste which looks for the overcoming of difficulties, and has pleasure in it, even without any view to resultant good. It has been made part of our moral nature that we should have a pleasure in encountering and conquering opposition, for the sake of the struggle and the victory, not for the sake of any after result: and not only our own victory, but the perception of that of another, is in all cases the source of pure and ennobling pleasure. And if we often hear it said, and truly said, that an artist has erred by seeking rather to show his skill in overcoming technical difficulties, than to reach a great end, be it observed that he is only blamed because he has sought to conquer an inferior difficulty rather than a great one; for it is much easier to overcome technical difficulties than to reach a great end. Whenever the visible victory over difficulties is found painful or in false taste, it is owing to the preference of an inferior to a great difficulty, or to the false estimate of what is difficult and what is not. It is far more difficult to be simple than to be complicated; far more difficult to sacrifice skill and cease exertion in the proper place, than to expend both indiscriminately. We shall find, in the course of our investigation, that beauty and difficulty go together; and that they are only mean and paltry difficulties which it is wrong or contemptible to wrestle with. Be it remembered then—Power is never wasted. Whatever power has been employed, produces excellence in proportion to its own dignity and exertion; and the faculty of perceiving

§ 5. *The pleasure attendant on conquering difficulties is right.*

[1] [Here again, in his copy for revision, Ruskin compresses, striking out the passage "Wherever, then, . . . difficulty alone."]

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this exertion, and appreciating this dignity, is the faculty of perceiving excellence.[1]

[1] [This chapter seems to have given the author much trouble; the MS. shows that it was very largely revised. A passage in one draft contains an effective illustration :—

> "It is often said such and such a man wasted his high powers on painting lemon-peels. No—he let his high powers rest and lie dormant, if he had any, while he used his little and mean powers to paint lemon-peels. If he did use his high powers upon them—if there were anything in the subject which could possibly give any field for the employment of a high power, excellence is produced, excellence capable of giving exactly the same gratification—in a lemon-peel or a Madonna, provided the same power be exercised on them."

The illustration of the Madonna and the lemon-peel was afterwards introduced lower down; see p. 101 *n.*]

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CHAPTER IV

OF IDEAS OF IMITATION

§ 1. False use of the term "imitation" by many writers on art.

FUSELI, in his Lectures,[1] and many other persons of equally just and accurate habits of thought (among others, S. T. Coleridge), make a distinction between imitation and copying, representing the first as the legitimate function of art—the latter as its corruption; but as such a distinction is by no means warranted, or explained by the common meaning of the words themselves, it is not easy to comprehend exactly in what sense they are used by those writers. And though, reasoning from the context, I can understand what ideas those words stand for in their minds, I cannot allow the terms to be properly used as symbols of those ideas, which (especially in the case of the word Imitation) are exceedingly complex, and totally different from what most people would understand by the term. And by men of less accurate thought, the word is used still more vaguely or falsely. For instance, Burke[2] (Treatise on the Sublime, part i. sect. 16) says: "When the object represented in poetry or painting is such as we could have no desire of seeing in the reality, then we may be sure that its power in poetry or painting is owing to the power of *imitation*." In which case the real pleasure may be in what we have been just speaking of, the dexterity of the artist's hand; or it may be in a beautiful or singular arrangement of colours, or a thoughtful chiaroscuro, or in the pure beauty of certain forms which art forces on our notice, though we should not have observed them in the reality; and I conceive that none of

[1] [See his *Works*, ii. 312, and in vol. iii. of the same, Aphorisms 101–102, 187.]
[2] [For another reference to Burke, see below, p. 128.]

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these sources of pleasure are in any way expressed or intimated by the term "imitation."

But there is one source of pleasure in works of art totally different from all these, which I conceive to be properly and accurately expressed by the word "imitation;" one which, though constantly confused in reasoning, because it is always associated, in fact, with other means of pleasure, is totally separated from them in its nature, and is the real basis of whatever complicated or various meaning may be afterwards attached to the word in the minds of men.

I wish to point out this distinct source of pleasure clearly at once, and only to use the word "imitation" in reference to it.

§ 2. *Real meaning of the term.*

Whenever anything looks like what it is not, the resemblance being so great as *nearly* to deceive, we feel a kind of pleasurable surprise, an agreeable excitement of mind, exactly the same in its nature as that which we receive from juggling. Whenever we perceive this in something produced by art, that is to say, whenever the work is seen to resemble something which we know it is not, we receive what I call an idea of imitation. *Why* such ideas are pleasing, it would be out of our present purpose to inquire; we only know that there is no man who does not feel pleasure in his animal nature from gentle surprise, and that such surprise can be excited in no more distinct manner than by the evidence that a thing is not what it appears to be.* Now two things are requisite to our complete and most pleasurable perception of this: first, that the resemblance be so perfect as to amount to a deception; secondly, that there be some means of proving at the same moment that it *is* a deception. The most perfect ideas and pleasures of imitation are, therefore, when one sense is contradicted by another, both bearing as positive evidence on the subject as each is capable of alone; as when the

§ 3. *What is requisite to the sense of imitation.*

* Arist. Rhet. I. II. 23.[1]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 omit the footnote reference to Aristotle; while ed. 3 adds to it the quotation, "*συλλογισμός ἐστιν, ὅτι τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο,*" omitted in eds. 4 *et seqq.*]

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eye says a thing is round, and the finger says it is flat: they are, therefore, never felt in so high a degree as in painting, where appearance of projection, roughness, hair, velvet, etc., are given with a smooth surface, or in wax-work, where the first evidence of the senses is perpetually contradicted by their experience. But the moment we come to marble, our definition checks us, for a marble figure does not look like what it is not: it looks like marble, and like the form of a man, but then it *is* marble, and it *is* the form of a man. It does not look like a man, which it is not, but like the form of a man, which it is. Form is form, *bonâ fide* and actual, whether in marble or in flesh—not an imitation or resemblance of form, but real form. The chalk outline of the bough of a tree on paper, is not an imitation; it looks like chalk and paper—not like wood, and that which it suggests to the mind is not properly said to be *like* the form of a bough, it *is* the form of a bough. Now, then, we see the limits of an idea of imitation; it extends only to the sensation of trickery and deception occasioned by a thing's intentionally seeming different from what it is; and the degree of the pleasure depends on the degree of difference and the perfection of the resemblance, not on the nature of the thing resembled. The simple pleasure in the imitation would be precisely of the same degree (if the accuracy could be equal), whether the subject of it were the hero or his horse.[1] There are other collateral sources of pleasure which are necessarily associated with this, but that part of the pleasure which depends on the imitation is the same in both.

§ 4. The pleasure resulting from imitation the most contemptible that can be derived from art.

Ideas of imitation, then, act by producing the simple pleasure of surprise, and that not of surprise in its higher sense and function, but of the mean and paltry surprise which is felt in jugglery. These ideas and pleasures are the most contemptible which can be received from art. First, because it is necessary to their enjoyment that the mind should reject the impression and address of the thing represented,

[1] [For "subject of it were the hero or his horse," eds. 1 and 2 read, "subject be a Madonna or a lemon-peel." See above, p. 98 *n.*]

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and fix itself only upon the reflection that it is not what it seems to be. All high or noble emotion or thought is thus rendered physically impossible, while the mind exults in what is very like a strictly sensual pleasure.[1] We may consider tears as a result of agony or of art, whichever we please, but not of both at the same moment. If we are surprised by them as an attainment of the one, it is impossible we can be moved by them as a sign of the other.

§ 5. Imitation is only of contemptible subjects.

Ideas of imitation are contemptible in the second place, because not only do they preclude the spectator from enjoying inherent beauty in the subject, but they can only be received from mean and paltry subjects, because it is impossible to imitate anything really great. We can "paint a cat or a fiddle, so that they look as if we could take them up;"[2] but we cannot imitate the ocean, or the Alps. We can imitate fruit, but not a tree; flowers, but not a pasture; cut-glass, but not the rainbow. All pictures in which deceptive powers of imitation are displayed are therefore either of contemptible subjects, or have the imitation shown in contemptible parts of them, bits of dress, jewels, furniture, etc.[3]

§ 6. Imitation is contemptible because it is easy.

Thirdly, these ideas are contemptible, because no ideas of power are associated with them. To the ignorant, imitation, indeed, seems difficult, and its success praiseworthy, but even they can by no possibility see more in the artist than they do in a juggler, who arrives at a strange end by means with which they are unacquainted. To the instructed, the juggler is by far the more respectable artist of the two, for they know sleight of hand to be an art of an immensely more difficult

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add, "and one precisely of the same order and degree, whether it be received from the bristles of a boar or the tears of a Magdalen."]

[2] [Sir Joshua Reynolds, in *The Idler*, No. 79.]

[3] [In one draft of this chapter, Ruskin added the remark:—

"One would fain hope that such [*i.e.* deceptive imitation] was not the criterion of art among the more enlightened of the ancients, and yet, as far as my own reading goes, I remember scarcely a passage of any author, not himself an artist, which does not point to mere deception as the sole end of art, and I cannot but fancy that even the gold and ivory and glass eyes of Phidias can have been good for little else."]

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acquirement, and to imply more ingenuity in the artist than a power of deceptive imitation in painting, which requires nothing more for its attainment than a true eye, a steady hand, and moderate industry—qualities which in no degree separate the imitative artist from a watchmaker, pin-maker, or any other neat-handed artificer. These remarks do not apply to the art of the diorama, or the stage, where the pleasure is not dependent on the imitation, but it is the same which we should receive from nature herself, only far inferior in degree. It is a noble pleasure; but we shall see in the course of our investigation, both that it is inferior to that which we receive when there is no deception at all, and why it is so.

§ 7. *Recapitulation.*

Whenever then in future, I speak of ideas of imitation, I wish to be understood to mean the immediate and present perception that something produced by art is not what it seems to be. I prefer saying "that it is not what it seems to be," to saying "that it seems to be what it is not," because we perceive at once what it seems to be, and the idea of imitation, and the consequent pleasure, result from the subsequent perception of its being something else—flat, for instance, when we thought it was round.[1]

[1] [With this and the following chapter compare *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. iv. §§ 20 *seqq.*, where Ruskin places the case against direct imitation "on a loftier and firmer foundation"—namely, that just as great art "is the work of the whole living creature, body and soul," so also "it addresses the whole creature," and falls in the scale of nobility if it does not make appeal to "the beholding imagination."]

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CHAPTER V

OF IDEAS OF TRUTH

THE word Truth, as applied to art, signifies the faithful statement, either to the mind or senses, of any fact of nature.

§ 1. Meaning of the word "truth" as applied to art.

We receive an idea of truth, then, when we perceive the faithfulness of such a statement.

The difference between ideas of truth and of imitation lies chiefly in the following points:

§ 2. First difference between truth and imitation.

First,—Imitation can only be of something material, but truth has reference to statements both of the qualities of material things, and of emotions, impressions, and thoughts. There is a moral as well as material truth,—a truth of impression as well as of form,—of thought as well as of matter; and the truth of impression and thought is a thousand times the more important of the two. Hence, truth is a term of universal application, but imitation is limited to that narrow field of art which takes cognizance only of material things.

§ 3. Second difference.

Secondly,—Truth may be stated by any signs or symbols which have a definite signification in the minds of those to whom they are addressed, although such signs be themselves no image nor likeness of anything. Whatever can excite in the mind the conception of certain facts, can give ideas of truth, though it be in no degree the imitation or resemblance of those facts. If there be—we do not say there is,—but if there be in painting anything which operates, as words do, not by resembling anything, but by being taken as a symbol and substitute for it, and thus inducing the effect of it, then this channel of communication can convey uncorrupted truth, though it do not in any degree resemble the

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facts whose conception it induces. But ideas of imitation, of course, require the likeness of the object. They speak to the perceptive faculties only: truth to the conceptive.[1]

§ 4. *Third difference.*

Thirdly, and in consequence of what is above stated, an idea of truth exists in the statement of *one* attribute of anything, but an idea of imitation requires the resemblance of as many attributes as we are usually cognizant of in its real presence. A pencil outline of the bough of a tree on white paper is a statement of a certain number of facts of form. It does not yet amount to the imitation of anything. The idea of that form is not given in nature by lines at all, still less by black lines with a white space between them. But those lines convey to the mind a distinct impression of a certain number of facts, which it recognizes as agreeable with its previous impressions of the bough of a tree; and it receives, therefore, an idea of truth. If, instead of two lines, we give a dark form with the brush, we convey information of a certain relation of shade between the bough and sky, recognizable for another idea of truth: but we have still no imitation, for the white paper is not the least like air, nor the black shadow like wood. It is not until after a certain number of ideas of truth have been collected together, that we arrive at an idea of imitation.

§ 5. *No accurate truths necessary to imitation.*

Hence it might at first sight appear, that an idea of imitation, inasmuch as several ideas of truth are united in it, is nobler than a simple idea of truth. And if it were necessary that the ideas of truth should be perfect, or should be subjects of contemplation *as such*, it would be so. But, observe, we require to produce the effect of imitation only so many and such ideas of truth as the *senses* are usually cognizant of. Now the senses are not usually, nor unless they be especially devoted to the service, cognizant, with accuracy, of any truths but those of space and projection. It requires long study and attention before they

[1] [The last sentence reads in the MS.:—
"Imitation, therefore, appeals only to the senses; truth often only to the mind."]

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give certain evidence of even the simplest truths of form. For instance, the quay on which the figure is sitting, with his hand at his eyes, in Claude's "Seaport," No. 14 in the National Gallery, is egregiously out of perspective.[1] The eye of this artist, with all his study, had thus not acquired the power of taking cognizance of the apparent form even of a simple parallelopiped: how much less of the complicated forms of boughs, leaves, or limbs? Although, therefore, something resembling the real form is necessary to deception, this something is not to be called a *truth* of form; for, strictly speaking, there are no degrees of truth, there are only degrees of approach to it; and an approach to it, whose feebleness and imperfection would instantly offend and give pain to a mind really capable of distinguishing truth, is yet quite sufficient for all the purposes of deceptive imitation. It is the same with regard to colour. If we were to paint a tree sky-blue, or a dog rose-pink, the discernment of the public would be keen enough to discover the falsehood; but, so that there be just so much approach to truth of colour as may come up to the common idea of it in men's minds, that is to say, if the trees be all bright green, and flesh unbroken buff, and ground unbroken brown, though all the real and refined truths of colour be wholly omitted, or rather defied and contradicted, there is yet quite enough for all purposes of imitation. The only facts, then, which we are usually and certainly cognizant of, are those of distance and projection; and if these be tolerably given, with something like truth of form and colour to assist them, the idea of imitation is complete. I would undertake[2] to paint an arm, with every muscle out of its place, and every bone of false form and dislocated articulation, and yet to observe certain coarse and broad resemblances of true outline, which, with careful shading, would induce deception, and draw down the praise and delight of the discerning public.

[1] ["The Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba;" for other references to the picture, see below, pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. § 5, p. 169.]

[2] [In his copy for revision Ruskin substitutes "It would be easy," and strikes out the following personal anecdote down to the end of § 5.]

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The other day at Bruges,[1] while I was endeavouring to set down in my note-book something of the ineffable expression of the Madonna in the Cathedral,[2] a French amateur came up to me, to inquire if I had seen the modern French pictures in a neighbouring church. I had not, but felt little inclined to leave my marble for all the canvas that ever suffered from French brushes. My apathy was attacked with gradually increasing energy of praise. Rubens never executed—Titian never coloured anything like them. I thought this highly probable, and still sat quiet. The voice continued at my ear. "Parbleu, Monsieur, Michel Ange n'a rien produit de plus beau!" "De plus *beau?*" repeated I, wishing to know what particular excellences of Michael Angelo were to be intimated by this expression. "Monsieur, on ne peut plus—c'est un tableau admirable—inconcevable; Monsieur," said the Frenchman, lifting up his hands to heaven, as he concentrated in one conclusive and overwhelming proposition the qualities which were to outshine Rubens and overpower Buonaroti,—"Monsieur, IL SORT!"

This gentleman could only perceive two truths—flesh colour and projection.[3] These constituted his notion of the perfection of painting; because they unite all that is necessary for deception. He was not therefore cognizant of many ideas of truth, though[4] perfectly cognizant of ideas of imitation.

We shall see, in the course of our investigation of ideas of

[1] [Ruskin returned from Switzerland in 1842 by the Rhine and Belgium.]

[2] [The statue of the Virgin and Child by Michael Angelo, figured at vol. i. p. 76 of J. A. Symonds' *Life* of the master. The MS. here inserts after "the Madonna in the Cathedral": "(which, whether it be Michael Angelo's or not, is one of the noblest pieces of marble in Europe)."]

[3] [For this sentence eds. 1 and 2 read:—

> "Had I wished to know if the anatomy of the limbs was faithfully marked—if their colour was truly expressive of light, and beautiful in itself—if the composition of the picture was perfect, or its conception great—I might as well have inquired of one of the Flanders mares in the stable at the Fleur de Blé, as of this gentleman. He could only . . . projection."

The old Hotel Fleur de Blé is now destroyed, and the theatre stands on the site; it was once the great resort of English travellers to Bruges: see Longfellow's poem, "The Belfry of Bruges: Carillon"—

> "Thus dreamed I, as by night I lay
> In Bruges, at the Fleur-de-Blé."]

[4] [The MS. here inserts, "in common with birds, monkies, and most of mankind."]

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truth, that ideas of imitation not only do not imply their presence, but even are inconsistent with it; and that pictures which imitate so as to deceive, are never true. But this is not the place for the proof of this; at present we have only to insist on the last and greatest distinction between ideas of truth and of imitation—that the mind, in receiving one of the former, dwells upon its own conception of the fact, or form, or feeling stated, and is occupied only with the qualities and character of that fact or form, considering it as real and existing, being all the while totally regardless of the signs or symbols by which the notion of it has been conveyed. These signs have no pretence, nor hypocrisy, nor legerdemain about them;—there is nothing to be found out, or sifted, or surprised in them;—they bear their message simply and clearly, and it is that message which the mind takes from them and dwells upon, regardless of the language in which it is delivered. But the mind, in receiving an idea of imitation, is wholly occupied in finding out that what has been suggested to it is not what it appears to be: it does not dwell on the suggestion, but on the perception that it is a false suggestion: it derives its pleasure, not from the contemplation of a truth, but from the discovery of a falsehood. So that the moment ideas of truth are grouped together, so as to give rise to an idea of imitation, they change their very nature—lose their essence as ideas of truth—and are corrupted and degraded, so as to share in the treachery of what they have produced. Hence, finally, ideas of truth are the foundation, and ideas of imitation, the destruction, of all art. We shall be better able to appreciate their relative dignity after the investigation which we propose of the functions of the former; but we may as well now express the conclusion to which we shall then be led—that no picture can be good which deceives by its imitation, for the very reason that nothing can be beautiful which is not true.[1]

§ 6. *Ideas of truth are inconsistent with ideas of imitation.*

[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin italicizes the aphorism, "no picture . . . not true." With this chapter may be compared ch. ii. in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, "The Lamp of Truth."]

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CHAPTER VI

OF IDEAS OF BEAUTY

ANY material object which can give us pleasure in the simple contemplation of its outward qualities without any direct and definite exertion of the intellect, I call in some way, or in some degree, beautiful. Why we receive pleasure from some forms and colours, and not from others, is no more to be asked or answered than why we like sugar and dislike wormwood. The utmost subtlety of investigation will only lead us to ultimate instincts and principles of human nature, for which no farther reason can be given than the simple will of the Deity that we should be so created.[1] We may indeed perceive, as far as we are acquainted with His nature, that we have been so constructed as, when in a healthy and cultivated state of mind, to derive pleasure from whatever things are illustrative of that nature; but we do not receive pleasure from them *because* they are illustrative of it, nor from any perception that they are illustrative of it, but instinctively and necessarily, as we derive sensual pleasure from the scent of a rose. On these primary principles of our nature, education and accident operate to an unlimited extent; they may be cultivated or checked, directed or diverted, gifted by right guidance with the most acute and faultless sense, or subjected by neglect to every phase of error and disease. He who has followed up[2] these natural laws of aversion and desire, rendering them more and more authoritative by constant obedience, so as to derive pleasure always from that which God originally intended should give him pleasure, and who derives the

§ 1. *Definition of the term "beautiful."*

[1] [With this passage cf. *Letters to a College Friend;* vii. § 4, Vol. I. p. 450.]

[2] [In his copy for revision Ruskin here also considerably curtails. He substitutes, "The judgment and enjoyment of art belong only to those who have followed up . . . constant obedience," and then deletes to the end of § 3.]

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greatest possible sum of pleasure from any given object, is a man of taste.

This, then, is the real meaning of this disputed word. Perfect taste is the faculty of receiving the greatest possible pleasure from those material sources which are attractive to our moral nature in its purity and perfection.[1] He who receives little pleasure from these sources wants taste; he who receives pleasure from any other sources, has false or bad taste.

§ 2. *Definition of the term "taste."*

And it is thus that the term "taste" is to be distinguished from that of "judgment," with which it is constantly confounded. Judgment is a general term, expressing definite action of the intellect, and applicable to every kind of subject which can be submitted to it. There may be judgment of congruity, judgment of truth, judgment of justice, and judgment of difficulty and excellence. But all these exertions of the intellect are totally distinct from taste, properly so called, which is the instinctive and instant preferring of one material object to another without any obvious reason, except that it is proper to human nature in its perfection so to do.

§ 3. *Distinction between taste and judgment.*

Observe, however, I do not mean by excluding direct exertion of the intellect from ideas of beauty, to assert that beauty has no effect upon, nor connection with the intellect. All our moral feelings are so interwoven with our intellectual powers, that we cannot affect the one without in some degree addressing the other; and in all high ideas of beauty, it is more than probable that much of the pleasure depends on delicate and untraceable perceptions of fitness, propriety, and relation, which are purely intellectual, and through which we arrive at our noblest ideas of what is commonly and rightly called "intellectual beauty." But there is yet no immediate *exertion* of the intellect; that is to say, if a person receiving even the noblest ideas of simple beauty be asked *why* he likes the object exciting

§ 4. *How far beauty may become intellectual.*

[1] [*Cf.* next volume, sec. i. ch. ii. § 8. The words "Perfect taste . . . perfection" are combined (by a connecting "but") with the words in § 1, above, "why we receive . . . wormwood," to form the first paragraph, "Principles of Art," in *Frondes Agrestes.*]

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them, he will not be able to give any distinct reason, nor to trace in his mind any formed thought, to which he can appeal as a source of pleasure. He will say that the thing gratifies, fills, hallows, exalts his mind, but he will not be able to say why, or how. If he can, and if he can show that he perceives in the object any expression of distinct thought, he has received more than an idea of beauty—it is an idea of relation.

§ 5. The high rank and function of ideas of beauty.

Ideas of beauty are among the noblest which can be presented to the human mind, invariably exalting and purifying it according to their degree; and it would appear that we are intended by the Deity to be constantly under their influence,[1] because there is not one single object in nature which is not capable of conveying them, and which, to the rightly perceiving mind, does not present an incalculably greater number of beautiful than of deformed parts; there being in fact scarcely anything, in pure undiseased nature, like positive deformity, but only degrees of beauty, or such slight and rare points of permitted contrast as may render all around them more valuable by their opposition—spots of blackness in creation, to make its colours felt.

§ 6. Meaning of the term "ideal beauty."

But although everything in nature is more or less beautiful, every species of object has its own kind and degree of beauty; some being in their own nature more beautiful than others, and few, if any, individuals possessing the utmost degree of beauty of which the species is capable. This utmost degree of specific beauty, necessarily coexistent with the utmost perfection of the object in other respects, is the ideal of the object.[2]

Ideas of beauty, then, be it remembered, are the subjects of moral, but not of intellectual perception. By the investigation of them we shall be led to the knowledge of the ideal[3] subjects of art.

[1] [Ruskin's copy for revision reads after this point, "because there are few objects in nature which are not capable of conveying them, and which, to the rightly perceiving mind, do not present a greater number of beautiful than of deformed parts." The rest of the paragraph is deleted.]

[2] [With this passage *cf.* the letter in reply to criticisms, in Appendix ii. p. 643.]

[3] [In the copy for revision the words "or pure" are here inserted.]

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CHAPTER VII

OF IDEAS OF RELATION

§ 1. *General meaning of the term.*

I USE this term rather as one of convenience than as adequately expressive of the vast class of ideas which I wish to be comprehended under it, namely, all those conveyable by art, which are the subjects of distinct intellectual perception and action,[1] and which are therefore worthy of the name of thoughts. But as every thought, or definite exertion of intellect, implies two subjects, and some connection or relation inferred between them, the term "ideas of relation" is not incorrect, though it is inexpressive.

§ 2. *What ideas are to be comprehended under it.*

Under this head must be arranged everything productive of expression, sentiment, and character, whether in figures or landscapes, (for there may be as much definite expression and marked carrying out of particular thoughts in the treatment of inanimate as of animate nature,) everything relating to the conception of the subject and to the congruity and relation of its parts; not as they enhance[2] each other's beauty by known and constant laws of composition, but as they give each other expression and meaning, by particular application, requiring distinct thought to discover or to enjoy; the choice, for instance, of a particular lurid or appalling light to illustrate an incident in itself terrible, or of a particular tone of pure colour to prepare the mind for the expression of refined and delicate feeling; and, in a still higher sense, the invention of such incidents and thoughts as can be expressed in words as well as on canvas,

[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin ends the sentence here, and deletes the five following lines.]

[2] [The revised copy reads, "both as they enhance each other's beauty by constant laws of composition, and as they give . . ."]

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and are totally independent of any means of art but such as may serve for the bare suggestion of them. The principal object in the foreground of Turner's "Building of Carthage" is a group of children sailing toy boats. The exquisite choice[1] of this incident, as expressive of the ruling passion which was to be the source of future greatness, in preference to the tumult of busy stonemasons or arming soldiers, is quite as appreciable when it is told as when it is seen,—it has nothing to do with the technicalities of painting; a scratch of the pen would have conveyed the idea and spoken to the intellect as much as the elaborate realizations of colour. Such a thought as this is something far above all art; it is epic poetry of the highest order. Claude, in subjects of the same kind, commonly introduces people carrying red trunks with iron locks about, and dwells, with infantine delight, on the lustre of the leather and the ornaments of the iron. The intellect can have no occupation here; we must look to the imitation or to nothing. Consequently, Turner arises above Claude in the very first instant of the conception of his picture, and acquires an intellectual superiority which no powers of the draughtsman or the artist (supposing that such existed in his antagonist) could ever wrest from him.

Such are the function and force of ideas of relation.[2] They

[1] [In his copy for revision (1867) Ruskin struck out the word "exquisite," and deleted the whole passage following, in which Turner is in this matter compared with Claude. Turner's "Building of Carthage" is No. 490 in the National Gallery; the reference to Claude's "red trunks" is to the "Seaport: Queen of Sheba," No. 14, beside which Turner's picture is placed in accordance with the condition in his will (see above, p. 41 *n.*). *Blackwood's* reviewer (and many critics after him) objected to the comparison as unfair: "The very iron locks and precious leather mean to tell you there is something still more precious within, worth all the cost of freightage; and you see, a little off, the great argosy that has brought the riches; and we humbly think that the ruling passion of a people whose 'princes were merchants and merchants princes,' as happily expressed by the said 'red trunks' as the rise of Carthage by the boys and boats" (Oct. 1843, p. 490). Ruskin's deletion of the passage above perhaps meant that he had come to feel that his point was over-strained; but for other criticisms on "The Queen of Sheba," see below, sec. ii. ch. vii. § 5, p. 169.]

[2] [In his copy for revision Ruskin strikes out also the whole of § 3, and all but the last sentence of § 4, adding the following connecting passage:—

> "These being the five ideas conveyable by art, we will now endeavour to obtain a true conception of the modes in which the expression of them is blended in great works and sought by good artists."

It appears, from another annotation in the same copy, that he meant here or elsewhere

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are what I have asserted in the second chapter of this section to be the noblest subjects of art. Dependent upon it only for expression, they cause all the rest of its complicated sources of pleasure to take, in comparison with them, the place of mere language or decoration; nay, even the noblest ideas of beauty sink at once beside these into subordination and subjection. It would add little to the influence of Landseer's picture above instanced, Chap. II. § 4, that the form of the dog should be conceived with every perfection of curve and colour which its nature was capable of, and that the ideal lines should be carried out with the science of a Praxiteles; nay, the instant that the beauty so obtained interfered with the impression of agony and desolation, and drew the mind away from the feeling of the animal to its outward form, that instant would the picture become monstrous and degraded. The utmost glory of the human body is a mean subject of contemplation, compared to the emotion, exertion, and character of that which animates it; the lustre of the limbs of the Aphrodite is faint beside that of the brow of the Madonna; and the divine form of the Greek god, except as it is the incarnation and expression of divine mind, is degraded beside the passion and the prophecy of the vaults of the Sistine.

§ 3. *The exceeding nobility of these ideas.*

Ideas of relation are of course, with respect to art generally, the most extensive as the most important source of pleasure; and if we proposed entering upon the criticism of historical works, it would be absurd to attempt to do so without farther subdivision and arrangement. But the old landscape painters got over so much canvas without either exercise of, or appeal to, the intellect, that we shall be little troubled with the subjects as far as they are concerned; and whatever subdivision we may adopt, as it will therefore have particular reference to the works of modern

§ 4. *Why no subdivision of so extensive a class is necessary.*

to re-write § 3 in a "modified" form. The general point of view expressed in the last sentence of § 3 is, however, very characteristic of Ruskin's permanent preferences in art. See, *e.g.*, the third of his "four essentials of the greatest art," namely, "the face principal, not the body" (*The Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret*).]

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artists, will be better understood when we have obtained some knowledge of them in less important points.

By the term "ideas of relation," then, I mean in future to express all those sources of pleasure, which involve and require, at the instant of their perception, active exertion of the intellectual powers.

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SECTION II

OF POWER

CHAPTER I

GENERAL PRINCIPLES RESPECTING IDEAS OF POWER

§ 1. No necessity for detailed study of ideas of imitation.

We have seen in the last section what classes of ideas may be conveyed by art, and we have been able so far to appreciate their relative worth as to see, that from the list, as it is to be applied to the purposes of legitimate criticism, we may at once throw out the ideas of imitation: first, because, as we have shown, they are unworthy the pursuit of the artist; and, secondly, because they are nothing more than the result of a particular association of ideas of truth. In examining the truth of art, therefore, we shall be compelled to take notice of those particular truths whose association gives rise to the ideas of imitation. We shall then see more clearly the meanness of those truths, and we shall find ourselves able to use them as tests of vice in art, saying of a picture,—"It deceives, therefore it must be bad."

§ 2. Nor for separate study of ideas of power.

Ideas of power, in the same way, cannot be completely viewed as a separate class; not because they are mean or unimportant, but because they are almost always associated with, or dependent upon, some of the higher ideas of truth, beauty, or relation, rendered with decision or velocity. That power which delights us in the chalk sketch of a great painter is not like that of the writing-master, mere dexterity of hand. It is the accuracy and certainty of the knowledge, rendered evident by

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its rapid and fearless expression, which is the real source of pleasure; and so upon each difficulty of art, whether it be to know, or to relate, or to invent, the sensation of power is attendant, when we see that difficulty totally and swiftly vanquished. Hence, as we determine what is otherwise desirable in art, we shall gradually develop the sources of the ideas of power; and if there be anything difficult which is not otherwise desirable, it must be afterwards considered separately.

§ 3. Except under one particular form.

But it will be necessary at present to notice a particular form of the ideas of power, which is partially independent of knowledge of truth, or difficulty, and which is apt to corrupt the judgment of the critic, and debase the work of the artist. It is evident that the conception of power which we receive from a calculation of unseen difficulty, and an estimate of unseen strength, can never be so impressive as that which we receive from the present sensation or sight of the one resisting, and the other overwhelming. In the one case the power is imagined, and in the other felt.[1]

§ 4. There are two modes of receiving ideas of power, commonly inconsistent.

There are thus two modes in which we receive the conception of power; one, the more just, when by a perfect knowledge of the difficulty to be overcome, and the means employed, we form a right estimate of the faculties exerted; the other, when without possessing such intimate and accurate knowledge, we are impressed by a sensation of power in visible action. If these two modes of receiving the impression agree in the result, and if the sensation be equal to the estimate, we receive the utmost possible idea of power. But this is the case, perhaps,

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 continue:—

"Supposing ourselves even capable of ascertaining in our own persons the truth of what is often by sculptors affirmed of the Laocoon, that the knowledge developed in it must have taken a lifetime to accumulate, we should yet scarcely receive from that statue the same sensation of power with which we are at once impressed by him who hurled the mighty prostration of the limbs of the Jonah along the arch of the Sistine."

This is the reference to M. Angelo mentioned in § 4, and made unintelligible in later editions by the omission of this sentence.]

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with the works of only one man out of the whole circle of the fathers of art—of him to whom we have just referred—Michael Angelo. In others, the estimate and the sensation are constantly unequal, and often contradictory.

§ 5. First reason of the inconsistency.

The first reason of this inconsistency is, that in order to receive a *sensation* of power, we must see it in operation. Its victory, therefore, must not be achieved, but achieving, and therefore imperfect. Thus we receive a greater sensation of power from the half-hewn limbs of the Twilight, or the Day, of the Cappella de' Medici, than even from the divine inebriety of the Bacchus in the gallery,—greater from the life dashed out along the friezes of the Parthenon, than from the polished limbs of the Apollo, —greater from the ink sketch of the head of Raffaelle's St. Catherine, than from the perfection of its realization.[1]

§ 6. Second reason of the inconsistency.

Another reason of the inconsistency is, that the sensation of power is in proportion to the apparent inadequacy of the means to the end; so that the impression is much greater from a partial success attained with slight effort, than from perfect success attained with greater proportional effort. Now, in all art, every touch or effort does individually less in proportion as the work approaches perfection. The first five chalk touches bring a head into existence out of nothing. No five touches in the whole course of the work will ever do so much as these, and the difference made by each touch is more and more imperceptible as the work

[1] [See *Præterita*, ii. ch. ii. § 29, where Ruskin describes his impressions at Florence in 1840: "Everybody about me swearing that Michael Angelo was the finest thing in the world, I was extremely proud of being pleased with him; confirmed greatly in my notion of my own infallibility, and with help of Rogers in the Lorenzo Chapel, and long sittings and standings about the Bacchus in the Uffizii, progressed greatly and vitally in Michael-Angelesque directions." The highly finished Bacchus of Michael Angelo is now in the Bargello: for another reference to it, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iii. § 28 *n.* It is interesting to compare Ruskin's appreciation of its "divine inebriety" with Shelley's criticism that "the countenance of this figure is the most revolting mistake of the spirit and meaning of Bacchus" (see *Essays and Letters from Abroad*, 1840, ii. 273, and *cf.* J. A. Symonds' *Life of Michelangelo*, i. 60). The "polished limbs of the Apollo" refers to the Apollo Belvedere in the Vatican; *cf.* pt. ii. sec. vi. ch. ii. § 2, ch. iii. § 23 *n.*, pp. 608, 627. The ink sketch of the head of Raphael's St. Catherine is in the University Galleries at Oxford (see J. C. Robinson's *Critical Account of the Drawings of Michel Angelo and Raffaello* in that collection, 1870, p. 176).]

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approaches completion. Consequently, the ratio between the means employed and the effect produced is constantly decreasing, and therefore the least sensation of power is received from the most perfect work.

§ 7. The sensation of power ought not to be sought in imperfect art.

It is thus evident that there are sensations of power about imperfect art, so that it be right art as far as it goes, which must always be wanting in its perfection; and that there are sources of pleasure in the hasty sketch and the rough-hewn block, which are partially wanting in the tinted canvas and the polished marble. But it is nevertheless wrong to prefer the sensation of power to the intellectual perception of it. There is in reality greater power in the completion than in the commencement; and though it be not so manifest to the senses, it ought to have higher influence on the mind;[1] and therefore in praising pictures for the ideas of power they convey, we must not look to the keenest sensation, but to the highest estimate, accompanied with as much of the sensation as is compatible with it; and thus we shall consider those pictures as conveying the highest ideas of power which attain the most *perfect* end with the slightest possible means; not, observe, those in which, though much has been done with little, all has not been done, but from the picture, in which *all* has been done, and yet not a touch thrown away. The quantity of work in the sketch is necessarily less in proportion to the effect obtained than in the picture; but yet the picture involves the greater power, if,

[1] [At this point, Ruskin had in one draft some additional sentences which are interesting as showing some of his preferences:—

"higher influence on the mind. It is only from preferring the sensual, to the mental, perception of power, that so many prefer the handling of Rubens to that of Raphael. This, however, is not the sign of a vitiated, but only of an imperfect, taste. A person totally ignorant of art, or of taste entirely corrupted and false, looks only for "finish," "softness," etc., and has no idea whatever of the perception of power, or of the pleasure resulting from it. A person partially instructed in art—on the right road, but not very far advanced—perceives the manifestation of power, but sensually, not intellectually. He goes to Salvator, not to Poussin; to Rubens, not to M. Angelo; to Rembrandt, not to Correggio. Gradually, as his knowledge increases, he perceives the hidden power of higher art, prefers accuracy to velocity, truth to brilliancy, and knowledge to display; and owns in the end a higher and nobler power in Pietro Perugino, than in Rubens. It is evident, therefore, that in praising pictures . . ."]

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out of all the additional labour bestowed on it, not a touch has been lost.[1]

§ 8. *Instance in pictures of modern artists.*

For instance, there are few drawings of the present day that involve greater sensations of power than those of Frederick Tayler.[2] Every dash tells, and the quantity of effect obtained is enormous, in proportion to the apparent means. But the effect obtained is not complete. Brilliant, beautiful, and right, as a sketch, the work is still far from perfection, as a drawing. On the contrary, there are few drawings of the present day that bear evidence of more labour bestowed, or more complicated means employed, than those of John Lewis.[3] The result does not, at first, so much convey an impression of inherent power as of prolonged exertion; but the result is complete. Water-colour drawing can be carried no farther; nothing has been left unfinished or untold. And on examination of the means employed, it is found and felt that not one touch out of the thousands employed has been thrown away;—that not one dot or dash could be spared without loss of effect;—and that the exertion

[1] [In curtailing and rearranging his material for this and the succeeding chapter, Ruskin omitted the following characteristic passage which occurs in the draft:—

> "But yet it is far easier to sketch than to finish—far less power is in reality indicated by the brilliant imperfection, than by the majestic completion of a work. I do not say that there may not be refinements in the sketch of a master which invariably set it above that of other men, but yet not so far as his completion is above their completion. People learn to sketch by finishing, they never learn to finish by sketching. We have numbers of water-colour amateurs, who can blot and dash, and produce masterly effects according to their own notion; but set them to complete anything, and they are children instantly. Hence the admirable advice so frequently and energetically given by Burke to Barry—'Whatever you do—finish it.'" *

* I must not be supposed here to speak favourably of what drawing masters and young ladies consider "finished" drawings. Whenever I speak of finish, I mean—not number of touches, but quantity of truth. The sketchers and dashers are perfectly right in preferring the good sketch to the faulty completion; but they are wrong in not aiming through it at a good completion, and studying for it and by it.]

[2] [Tayler (1802–1889), water-colour painter of sporting and pastoral subjects, was President of the (Old) Water-Colour Society from 1858 to 1871. Ruskin was early an admirer of his work: see *The Poetry of Architecture*, § 5 (Vol. I. p. 7), and *cf.* below, pt. ii. sec. iii. ch. iv. § 21. For later criticisms, see *Academy Notes*, 1856, 1858.]

[3] [John Frederick Lewis, R.A. (1804–1876), was always classed by Ruskin as one of the great painters of the time, and a leader in the Pre-Raphaelite movement. For another reference, see below, pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. § 37. See also *Poetry of Architecture*, § 5; *Academy Notes*, 1855–59; *Pre-Raphaelitism*; *Arrows of the Chace*, 1880 ed., i. pp. 95, 109, 171; *A Joy for Ever*, § 102 *n.*; *Præterita*, ii. ch. ix. § 176.]

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has been as swift as it has been prolonged—as bold as it has been persevering. The power involved in such a picture is of the highest order, and the pleasure following on the estimate of it pure, and enduring.[1]

§ 9. Connection between ideas of power and modes of execution.

But there is still farther ground for caution in pursuing the sensation of power, connected with the particular characters and modes of execution. This we shall be better able to understand by briefly reviewing the various excellences which may belong to execution, and give pleasure in it; though the full determination of what is desirable in it, and the critical examination of the execution of different artists, must be deferred, as will be immediately seen, until we are more fully acquainted with the principles of truth.

[1] In eds. 1 and 2 this sentence ran thus :—

"The power involved in such a picture, and the ideas and pleasures following on the estimate of it, are unquestionably far higher than can legitimately be traced in, or received from the works of any other mere water-colour master now living."

In his copy for revision Ruskin deleted the whole of § 8, and the last four lines and a half of § 9.]

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CHAPTER II

OF IDEAS OF POWER, AS THEY ARE DEPENDENT UPON EXECUTION

§ 1. Meaning of the term "execution."

§ 2. The first quality of execution is truth.

By the term Execution, I understand the right mechanical use of the means of art to produce a given end.

All qualities of execution, properly so called, are influenced by, and in a great degree dependent on, a far higher power than that of mere execution, —knowledge of truth. For exactly in proportion as an artist is certain of his end, will he be swift and simple in his means; and as he is accurate and deep in his knowledge, will he be refined and precise in his touch. The first merit of manipulation, then, is that delicate and ceaseless expression of refined truth which is carried out to the last touch, and shadow of a touch, and which makes every hair's-breadth of importance, and every gradation full of meaning. It is not, properly speaking, execution; but it is the only source of difference between the execution of a commonplace and that of a perfect artist. The lowest draughtsman, if he have spent the same time in handling the brush, may be equal to the highest in the other qualities of execution (in swiftness, simplicity, and decision); but not in truth. It is in the perfection and precision of the instantaneous line that the claim to immortality is laid. If this truth of truths be present, all the other qualities of execution may well be spared; and to those artists who wish to excuse their ignorance and inaccuracy by a species of execution which is a perpetual proclamation, "qu'ils n'ont demeuré qu'un quart d'heure à le faire," we may reply with the truthful Alceste, "Monsieur, le temps ne fait rien à l'affaire."[1]

[1] [See above, p. 94 n.]

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The second quality of execution is simplicity. The more unpretending, quiet, and retiring the means, the more impressive their effect. Any ostentation, brilliancy, or pretension of touch,—any exhibition of power or quickness, merely as such,—above all, any attempt to render lines attractive at the expense of their meaning, is vice.

§ 3. *The second, simplicity.*

The third is mystery. Nature is always mysterious and secret in her use of means; and art is always likest her when it is most inexplicable. That execution which is least comprehensible, and which therefore defies imitation (other qualities being supposed alike), is the best.

§ 4. *The third, mystery.*

The fourth is inadequacy. The less sufficient the means appear to the end, the greater (as has been already noticed) will be the sensation of power.

§ 5. *The fourth, inadequacy; and the fifth, decision.*

The fifth is decision: the appearance, that is, that whatever is done, has been done fearlessly and at once; because this gives us the impression that both the fact to be represented, and the means necessary to its representation, were perfectly known.

The sixth is velocity. Not only is velocity, or the appearance of it, agreeable as decision is, because it gives ideas of power and knowledge; but of two touches, as nearly as possible the same in other respects, the quickest will invariably be the best. Truth being supposed equally present in the shape and direction of both, there will be more evenness, grace, and variety, in the quick one, than in the slow one. It will be more agreeable to the eye as a touch or line, and will possess more of the qualities of the lines of nature—gradation, uncertainty, and unity.

§ 6. *The sixth, velocity.*

These six qualities are the only perfectly legitimate sources of pleasure in execution, but I might have added a seventh—strangeness, which in many cases is productive of a pleasure not altogether mean or degrading, though scarcely right. Supposing the other higher qualities first secured, it adds in no small degree to our impression of the artist's knowledge, if the

§ 7. *Strangeness an illegitimate source of pleasure in execution.*

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means used be such as we should never have thought of, or should have thought adapted to a contrary effect. Let us, for instance, compare the execution of the bull's head in the left hand lowest corner of the Adoration of the Magi,[1] in the Museum at Antwerp, with that in Berghem's landscape, No. 132, in the Dulwich Gallery.[2] Rubens first scratches horizontally over his canvas a thin greyish brown, transparent and even, very much the colour of light wainscot; the horizontal strokes of the bristles being left so evident that the whole might be taken for an imitation of wood, were it not for its transparency. On this ground the eye, nostril, and outline of the cheek are given with two or three rude brown touches (about three or four minutes' work in all), though the head is colossal. The background is then laid in with thick solid, warm white, actually projecting all round the head, leaving it in dark intaglio. Finally, five thin and scratchy strokes of very cold bluish white are struck for the high light on the forehead and nose, and the head is complete. Seen within a yard of the canvas, it looks actually transparent—a flimsy, meaningless, distant shadow; while the background looks solid, projecting, and near. From the right distance (ten or twelve yards off, whence alone the whole of the picture can be seen), it is a complete, rich, substantial, and living realization of the projecting head of the animal; while the background falls far behind. Now there is no slight nor mean pleasure in perceiving such a result attained by means so strange. By Berghem, on the other hand, a dark background is first laid in with exquisite delicacy and transparency, and on this the cow's head is actually modelled in luminous white, the separate locks of hair projecting from the canvas. No surprise, nor much pleasure of any kind, would be attendant on this execution, even were the result equally successful; and what little pleasure we have in it vanishes, when on retiring from the picture, we find the head shining like a distant lantern, instead of seeming substantial or near. Yet

[1] [By Rubens: a large composition of nearly twenty figures.]
[2] [See below, pt. ii. sec. ii. ch. iii. (additional matter at end of chapter, § 13).]

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strangeness is not to be considered as a legitimate source of pleasure. That means which is most conducive to the end, should always be the most pleasurable; and that which is most conducive to the end, can be strange only to the ignorance of the spectator. This kind of pleasure is illegitimate, therefore, because it implies and requires, in those who feel it, ignorance of art.

§ 8. Yet even the legitimate sources of pleasure in execution are inconsistent with each other.

The legitimate sources of pleasure in execution are therefore truth, simplicity, mystery, inadequacy, decision, and velocity. But of these, be it observed, some are so far inconsistent with others, that they cannot be united in high degrees. Mystery with inadequacy, for instance; since to see that the means are inadequate, we must see what they are. Now the first three are the great qualities of execution, and the last three are the attractive ones, because on them are chiefly attendant the ideas of power. By the first three the attention is withdrawn from the means and fixed on the result: by the last three, withdrawn from the result, and fixed on the means. To see that execution is swift or that it is decided, we must look away from its creation to observe it in the act of creating; we must think more of the pallet than of the picture, but simplicity and mystery compel the mind to leave the means and fix itself on the conception. Hence the danger of too great fondness for those sensations of power which are associated with the last three qualities of execution; for, although it is most desirable that these should be present as far as they are consistent with the others, and though their visible absence is always painful and wrong, yet the moment the higher qualities are sacrificed to them in the least degree, we have a brilliant vice. Berghem and Salvator Rosa are good instances of vicious execution dependent on too great fondness for sensations of power, vicious because intrusive and attractive in itself, instead of being subordinate to its results and forgotten in them. There is perhaps no greater stumbling-block in the artist's way, than the tendency to sacrifice truth and simplicity to

§ 9. And fondness for ideas of power leads to the adoption of the lowest.

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decision and velocity,* captivating qualities, easy of attainment, and sure to attract attention and praise, while the delicate degree of truth which is at first sacrificed to them is so totally unappreciable by the majority of spectators, so difficult of attainment to the artist, that it is no wonder that effects so arduous and unrewarded should be abandoned.

§ 10. *Therefore perilous.* But if the temptation be once yielded to, its consequences are fatal; there is no pause in the fall. I could name a celebrated modern artist—once a man of the highest power and promise, who is a glaring instance of the peril of such a course. Misled by the undue popularity of his swift execution, he has sacrificed to it, first precision, and then truth, and her associate, beauty. What was first neglect of nature, has become contradiction of her; what was once imperfection, is now falsehood; and all[1] that was meritorious in his manner has

* I have here noticed only noble vices, the sacrifices of one excellence to another legitimate, but inferior one. There are, on the other hand, qualities of execution which are often sought for, and praised, though scarcely by the class of persons for whom I am writing, in which everything is sacrificed to illegitimate and contemptible sources of pleasure, and these are vice throughout, and have no redeeming quality nor excusing aim. Such is that which is often thought so desirable in the drawing-master, under the title of boldness, meaning that no touch is ever to be made less than the tenth of an inch broad; such, on the other hand, the softness[2] and smoothness which are the great attraction of Carlo Dolci, and such the exhibition of particular powers and tricks of the hand and fingers, in total forgetfulness of any end whatsoever to be attained thereby, which is especially characteristic of modern engraving. Compare Part II. Sect. II. Chap. II. § 20 (note).

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[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin strikes out the reference to an unnamed artist—"I could name . . . beauty," and reads more briefly, "; there is no pause in the fall, until all that was meritorious in the original manner," etc.]

[2] [In eds. 1 and 2 this passage is as follows:—

"broad; such is every effort on the part of the engraver to give roughness or direction of surface by wriggling or peculiarly directed lines, and such the softness and smoothness which are the great attraction of Carlo Dolci. These are the exhibition of particular powers and tricks of the hand and fingers, in total forgetfulness of any end whatsoever to be attained thereby, and would scarcely deserve the pains of criticism were it not for the unaccountable delusion that makes even men of taste and feeling suppose that to be right in an engraving, which they would cry out against as detestable and intolerable in a drawing. How long are our engravers to be allowed to go on murdering the foreground of our great artists, twisting and wriggling and hatching and scratching over the smooth stones and glossy leaves, until St. Lawrence's gridiron is a jest to the martyrdom of the eye, 'making out' everything that the artist intentionally concealed, and smothering everything that he made refined or conspicuous? When shall we have an engraver who will touch his steel as if he had fingers and feeling?"]

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become the worst, because the most attractive of vices,—decision without a foundation, and swiftness without an end.

§ 11. *Recapitulation.*

Such are the principal modes in which the ideas of power may become a dangerous attraction to the artist—a false test to the critic. But in all cases where they lead us astray, it will be found that the error is caused by our preferring victory over a small *apparent* difficulty to victory over a great, but concealed one; and so that we keep this distinction constantly in view, (whether with reference to execution or to any other quality of art,) between the sensation and the intellectual estimate of power, we shall always find the ideas of power[1] a just and high source of pleasure in every kind and grade of art.[2]

[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin here inserted the words "connected with execution."]

[2] [This is another of the chapters which seem to have given Ruskin much trouble. The MS. shows that the whole of it was rewritten, largely, it would seem, in order to gain greater compression. A passage in one draft is of interest, as giving an additional point of view:—

> "Each excellence which is theoretically desirable depends on the nature of the subject. In subjects full of motion and tumult, impetuosity and confusion of execution assist the great impression to be conveyed; in subjects full of repose, simplicity is the great object. A feebleness of touch may be admitted in a Madonna, which would be painful in a Hercules; and a rigidity of execution excusable in a falling figure, which would be intolerable in a recumbent one. A great artist will vary the particular excellencies of his execution; making one more prominent than another according to the nature of his subject. And that execution may be always considered the best which is most illustrative of the subject—tenderness in a Magdalen, energy in an Achilles, simplicity in a Jupiter, Truth in all."]

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CHAPTER III

OF THE SUBLIME

§ 1. Sublimity is the effect upon the mind of anything above it.

It may perhaps be wondered that, in the division we have made of our subject, we have taken no notice of the sublime in art, and that, in our explanation of that division, we have not once used the word.

The fact is, that sublimity is not a specific term,—not a term descriptive of the effect of a particular class of ideas. Anything which elevates the mind is sublime, and elevation of mind is produced by the contemplation of greatness of any kind; but chiefly, of course, by the greatness of the noblest things. Sublimity is, therefore, only another word for the effect of greatness upon the feelings;—greatness, whether of matter, space, power, virtue, or beauty: and there is perhaps no desirable quality of a work of art, which, in its perfection, is not, in some way or degree, sublime.

§ 2. Burke's theory of the nature of the sublime incorrect, and why.

I am fully prepared to allow of much ingenuity in Burke's theory of the sublime,[1] as connected with self-preservation. There are few things so great as death; and there is perhaps nothing which banishes all littleness of thought and feeling in an equal degree with its contemplation. Everything, therefore, which in any way points to it, and, therefore, most dangers and powers over which we have little control, are in some degree sublime. But

[1] [*The Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* was one of the earliest works of Edmund Burke, being published in his twenty-seventh year (1756). His theory that sense of beauty is associated with relaxation, and terror with contraction, of the fibres of the body may not be acceptable; but in approaching the criticism of art from the psychological side, Burke's work made a great advance. It profoundly interested and stimulated Lessing, who set about a translation of it. Ruskin, as will be seen, read the essay with great care and attention, and with a large measure of agreement. If Mr. Morley's statement (*Burke* in the "English Men of Letters" Series, p. 18) that "The great rhetorical art critic of our own day refers to it in words of disparagement" is meant to refer to Ruskin, it is incorrect; see especially, *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. ii. § 14 *n.*]

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it is not the fear, observe, but the contemplation of death; not the instinctive shudder and struggle of self-preservation, but the deliberate measurement of the doom, which is really great or sublime in feeling. It is not while we shrink, but while we defy, that we receive or convey the highest conceptions of the fate. There is no sublimity in the agony of terror.[1] Whether do we trace it most in the cry to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us," or in the calmness of the prophecy—"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God"?[2] A little reflection will easily convince any one, that so far from the feelings of self-preservation being necessary to the sublime, their greatest action is totally destructive of it; and that there are few feelings less capable of its perception than those of a coward. But the simple conception or idea of greatness of suffering or extent of destruction is sublime, whether there be any connection of that idea with ourselves or not. If we were placed beyond the reach of all peril or pain, the perception of these agencies in their influence on others would not be less sublime; not because peril and pain are sublime in their own nature, but because their contemplation, exciting compassion or fortitude, elevates the mind, and renders meanness of thought impossible. Beauty is not so often felt to be sublime; because, in many kinds of purely material beauty there is some truth in Burke's assertion that "littleness" is one of its elements.[3] But he who has not felt that there may be beauty without littleness, and that such beauty is a source of the sublime, is yet ignorant of the meaning of the ideal in art. I do not mean, in tracing the source of the sublime to greatness, to hamper

§ 3. Danger is sublime, but not the fear of it.

§ 4. The highest beauty is sublime.

§ 5. And generally whatever elevates the mind.

[1] [The MS. here reads:—

"We do not feel it from the cry to the mountains 'Fall on us,' but from the fearlessness of him who can—'the darkling Universe defy—to quench his Immortality.'"

The quotation is from the poem entitled "The Last Man," by Campbell. "Darkling" should be "darkening."]

[2] [Hosea, x. 8; Luke, xxiii. 30; Job, xix. 26.]

[3] [See *Of the Sublime and Beautiful*, pt. iii. sec. xiii.]

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myself with any fine-spun theory. I take the widest possible ground of investigation, that sublimity is found wherever anything elevates the mind; that is, wherever it contemplates anything above itself, and perceives it to be so. This is the simple philological signification of the word derived from *sublimis;* and will serve us much more easily, and be a far clearer and more evident ground of argument than any mere metaphysical or more limited definition; while the proof of its justness will be naturally developed by its application to the different branches of art.

§ 6. The former division of the subject is therefore sufficient.

As, therefore, the sublime is not distinct from what is beautiful, nor from other sources of pleasure in art, but is only a particular mode and manifestation of them, my subject will divide itself into the investigations of ideas of truth, beauty, and relation; and to each of these classes of ideas I destine a separate part of the work.

The investigation of ideas of truth will enable us to determine the relative rank of artists as followers and historians of nature:

That of ideas of beauty will lead us to compare them in their attainment, first of what is agreeable in technical matters; then in colour and composition; finally and chiefly, in the purity of their conceptions of the ideal:

And that of ideas of relation will lead us to compare them as originators of just thought.[1]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read: "originators of new and just thought; as it is new, leading us to observe the powers of fancy and imagination; as it is just, the force of moral truth."]

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PART II

OF TRUTH

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SECTION I

GENERAL PRINCIPLES RESPECTING IDEAS OF TRUTH

CHAPTER I

OF IDEAS OF TRUTH IN THEIR CONNECTION WITH THOSE OF BEAUTY AND RELATION

§ 1. The two great ends of landscape painting are the representation of facts and thoughts.

It cannot but be evident from the above division of the ideas conveyable by art, that the landscape painter must always have two great and distinct ends: the first, to induce in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of any natural objects whatsoever; the second, to guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself.

In attaining the first end the painter only places the spectator where he stands himself; he sets him before the landscape and leaves him. The spectator is alone. He may follow out his own thoughts as he would in the natural solitude; or he may remain untouched, unreflecting and regardless, as his disposition may incline him; but he has nothing of thought given to him; no new ideas, no unknown feelings, forced on his attention or his heart. The artist is his conveyance, not his companion,—his horse, not his friend.[1] But in attaining

[1] [The first draft of this passage (see below, p. 681) here adds:—

"A railroad, or a stage-coach, would have done as much, and more, in a little longer time; they would have set him down before the true landscape, and left him to his own thoughts."

Cf. *Academy Notes*, 1875, where Ruskin, referring back to this passage, adds: "The worst of such friendliness, however, is that a conceited painter may at last leave Nature out of the question altogether, and talk of himself only; and then there is nothing for it but to go back to the Government Surveyor."]

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the second end, the artist not only *places* the spectator, but *talks* to him; makes him a sharer in his own strong feelings and quick thoughts; hurries him away in his own enthusiasm; guides him to all that is beautiful; snatches him from all that is base; and leaves him more than delighted,—ennobled and instructed, under the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind, and having been endowed for a time with the keen perception and the impetuous emotions of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence.

§ 2. They induce a different choice of material subjects.

Each of these different aims of art will necessitate a different system of choice of objects to be represented. The first does not indeed imply choice at all, but it is usually united with the selection of such objects as may be naturally and constantly pleasing to all men, at all times; and this selection, when perfect and careful, leads to the attainment of the pure ideal. But the artist aiming at the second end, selects his objects for their meaning and character, rather than for their beauty; and uses them rather to throw light upon the particular thought he wishes to convey, than as in themselves objects of unconnected admiration.

§ 3. The first mode of selection apt to produce sameness and repetition.

Now, although the first mode of selection, when guided by deep reflection, may rise to the production of works possessing a noble and ceaseless influence on the human mind, it is likely to degenerate into, or rather, in nine cases out of ten, it never goes beyond, a mere appeal to such parts of our animal nature as are constant and common,—shared by all, and perpetual in all; such, for instance, as the pleasure of the eye in the opposition of a cold and warm colour, or of a massy form with a delicate one. It also tends to induce constant repetition of the same ideas, and reference to the same principles; it gives rise to those *rules* of art which properly excited Reynolds's indignation when applied to its higher efforts; it is the source of, and the apology for, that host of technicalities and absurdities which

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in all ages have been the curse of art and the crown of the connoisseur.[1]

But art, in its second and highest aim, is not an appeal to constant animal feelings, but an expression and awakening of individual thought: it is therefore as various and as extended in its efforts as the compass and grasp of the directing mind; and we feel, in each of its results, that we are looking, not at a specimen of a tradesman's wares, of which he is ready to make us a dozen to match, but at one coruscation of a perpetually active mind, like which there has not been, and will not be another.

§ 4. *The second necessitating variety.*

Hence, although there can be no doubt which of these branches of art is the higher, it is equally evident that the first will be the more generally felt and appreciated. For the simple treatment of the truths of nature must in itself be pleasing to every order of mind; because every truth of nature is more or less beautiful: and if there be just and right selection of the more important of these truths—based, as above explained, on feelings and desires common to all mankind,—the facts so selected must, in some degree, be delightful to all, and their value appreciable by all; more or less, indeed, as their senses and instinct have been rendered more or less acute and accurate by use and study; but in some degree by all, and in the same way by all.

§ 5. *Yet the first is delightful to all.*

But the highest art, being based on sensations of peculiar minds, sensations occurring to *them* only at particular times, and to a plurality of mankind perhaps never, and being expressive of thoughts which could

§ 6. *The second only to a few.*

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 continue:—
"and of those 'standard' pictures with which half the walls of Europe are covered, and for the manufacture of which recipes are to be found in most works on art. 'Take one-eighth light, three-eighths middle tint, four-eighths shadow; mix carefully, flavour with cochineal, cool with ultramarine, and serve up with sentiment.' Nay, even where a high ideal has been sought for, the search seldom produces more than one good picture, on which a few clever but monotonous changes are rung by the artist himself, and innumerable discords by his imitators, ending in the multiplication *ad nauseam* of the legitimate landscape ragout, composed of a large tree, a bridge, a city, a river, and a fisherman."]

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only rise out of a mass of the most extended knowledge, and of dispositions modified in a thousand ways by peculiarity of intellect, can only be met and understood by persons having some sort of sympathy with the high and solitary minds which produced it—sympathy only to be felt by minds in some degree high and solitary themselves.[1] He alone can appreciate the art, who could comprehend the conversation of the painter, and share in his emotion, in moments of his most fiery passion and most original thought. And whereas the true meaning and end of his art must thus be sealed to thousands, or misunderstood by them; so also, as he is sometimes obliged, in working out his own peculiar end, to set at defiance those constant laws which have arisen out of our lower and changeless desires, that, whose purpose is unseen, is frequently in its means and parts displeasing.

§ 7. *The first necessary to the second.*

But this want of extended influence in high art, be it especially observed, proceeds from no want of truth in the art itself, but from a want of sympathy in the spectator with those feelings in the artist which prompt him to the utterance of one truth rather than of another. For (and this is what I wish at present especially to insist upon) although it is possible to reach what I have stated to be the first end of art, the representation of facts, without reaching the second, the representation of thoughts, yet it is altogether impossible to reach the second without having previously reached the first. I do not say that a man cannot think, having false basis and material for thought; but that a false thought is worse than the want of thought, and therefore is not art. And this is the reason why, though I consider the second as the real and only important end of all art, I call the representation of facts the first end; because it is necessary to the other and must be attained before it. It is the foundation of all art; like real foundations, it may be little

[1] [*Cf.* above, p. 80; and so Matthew Arnold (*In Utrumque Paratus*):—

"The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams;
Alone the sun rises, and alone
Spring the great streams."]

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thought of when a brilliant fabric is raised on it; but it must be there. And as few buildings are beautiful unless every line and column of their mass have reference to their foundation, and be suggestive of its existence and strength, so nothing can be beautiful in art which does not in all its parts suggest and guide to the foundation, even where no undecorated portion of it is visible; while the noblest edifices of art are built of such pure and fine crystal that the foundation may all be seen through them: and then many, while they do not see what is built upon that first story, yet much admire the solidity of its brickwork, thinking they understand all that is to be understood of the matter; while others stand beside them, looking not at the low story, but up into the heaven at that building of crystal in which the builder's spirit is dwelling. And thus, though we want the thoughts and feelings of the artist as well as the truth, yet they must be thoughts arising out of the knowledge of truth, and feelings arising out of the contemplation of truth. We do not want his mind to be like a badly blown glass, that distorts what we see through it, but like a glass of sweet and strange colour, that gives new tones to what we see through it; and a glass of rare strength and clearness too, to let us see more than we could ourselves, and bring nature up to us and near to us.* Nothing can atone for the want of truth, not the most brilliant imagination, the most playful fancy, the most pure feeling (supposing that feeling *could* be pure and false at the same time); not the most exalted conception, nor the most comprehensive grasp of intellect, can make amends for the want of truth, and that for two reasons: first, because falsehood is in itself revolting and degrading; and secondly, because nature is so immeasurably superior to all that the human mind can conceive, that every departure from her is a fall beneath her, so that there can be no such thing as an ornamental falsehood. All falsehood must be a blot as well as a sin, an injury as well as a deception.

§ 8. *The exceeding importance of truth.*

* Compare *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. chap. xxx. § 5.[1]

[1] [This note was added in ed. 5.]

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We shall, in consequence, find that no artist can be graceful, imaginative, or original, unless he be truthful; and that the pursuit of beauty, instead of leading us away from truth, increases the desire for it and the necessity of it tenfold; so that those artists who are really great in imaginative power, will be found to have based their boldness of conception on a mass of knowledge far exceeding that possessed by those who pride themselves on its accumulation without regarding its use. Coldness and want of passion in a picture are not signs of the accuracy, but of the paucity of its statements: true vigour and brilliancy are not signs of audacity, but of knowledge.

§ 9. Coldness or want of beauty no sign of truth.

Hence it follows that it is in the power of all, with care and time, to form something like a just judgment of the relative merits of artists; for although with respect to the feeling and passion of pictures, it is often as impossible to criticize as to appreciate, except to such as are in some degree equal in powers of mind, and in some respects the same in modes of mind, with those whose works they judge; yet, with respect to the representation of facts, it is possible for all, by attention, to form a right judgment of the respective powers and attainments of every artist. Truth is a bar of comparison at which they may all be examined, and according to the rank they take in this examination will almost invariably be that which, if capable of appreciating them in every respect, we should be just in assigning them; so strict is the connection, so constant the relation, between the sum of knowledge and the extent of thought, between accuracy of perception and vividness of idea.

§ 10. How truth may be considered a just criterion of all art.

I shall endeavour, therefore, in the present portion of the work, to enter with care and impartiality into the investigation of the claims of the schools of ancient and modern landscape to faithfulness in representing nature. I shall pay no regard whatsoever to what may be thought beautiful, or sublime, or imaginative. I shall look only for truth; bare, clear, downright statement of facts; showing in each particular, as far as I am able, what the truth of nature is, and then seeking for

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the plain expression of it, and for that alone. And I shall thus endeavour, totally regardless of fervour of imagination or brilliancy of effect, or any other of their more captivating qualities, to examine and to judge the works of the great living painter, who is, I believe, imagined by the majority of the public, to paint more falsehood and less fact than any other known master. We shall see with what reason.

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CHAPTER II

THAT THE TRUTH OF NATURE IS NOT TO BE DISCERNED BY THE UNEDUCATED SENSES

§ 1. The common self-deception of men with respect to their power of discerning truth.

It may be here inquired by the reader, with much appearance of reason, why I think it necessary to devote a separate portion of the work to the showing of what is truthful in art. "Cannot we," say the public, "see what nature is with our own eyes, and find out for ourselves what is like her?" It will be as well to determine this question before we go farther, because if this were possible, there would be little need of criticism or teaching with respect to art.

Now I have just said that it is possible for all men, by care and attention, to form a just judgment of the fidelity of artists to nature. To do this no peculiar powers of mind are required, no sympathy with particular feelings, nothing which every man of ordinary intellect does not in some degree possess,—powers, namely, of observation and intelligence, which by cultivation may be brought to a high degree of perfection and acuteness. But until this cultivation has been bestowed, and until the instrument thereby perfected has been employed in a consistent series of careful observations, it is as absurd as it is audacious to pretend to form any judgment whatsoever respecting the truth of art: and my first business, before going a step farther, must be to combat the nearly universal error of belief among the thoughtless and unreflecting, that they know either what nature is, or what is like her; that they can discover truth by instinct, and that their minds are such pure Venice glass as to be shocked by all treachery. I have to prove to them that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in their philosophy, and that

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the truth of nature is a part of the truth of God; to him who does not search it out, darkness, as it is to him who does, infinity.

§ 2. Men usually see little of what is before their eyes.

The first great mistake that people make in the matter, is the supposition that they must *see* a thing if it be before their eyes. They forget the great truth told them by Locke, book ii. chap. 9, § 8.[1]—"This is certain, that whatever alterations are made in the body, if they reach not the mind; whatever impressions are made on the outward parts, if they are not taken notice of within; there is no perception. Fire may burn our bodies, with no other effect than it does a billet, unless the motion be continued to the brain, and there the sense of heat or idea of pain be produced in the mind, wherein consists actual perception. How often may a man observe in himself, that whilst his mind is intently employed in the contemplation of some objects,[2] and curiously surveying some ideas that are there, it takes no notice of impressions of sounding bodies made upon the organ of hearing, with the same attention that uses to be for the producing the idea of sound? A sufficient impulse there may be on the organ, but if not reaching the observation of the mind, there follows no perception: and though the motion that uses to produce the idea of sound be made in the ear, yet no sound is heard." And what is here said, which all must feel by their own experience to be true, is more remarkably and necessarily the case with sight than with any other of the senses, for this reason, that the ear is not accustomed to exercise constantly its functions of hearing; it is accustomed to stillness, and the occurrence of a sound of any kind whatsoever is apt to awake attention, and be followed with perception, in proportion to the degree of sound; but the eye during our waking hours, exercises constantly its function of seeing; it is its constant habit; we always, as far as the *bodily* organ is concerned, see something, and we always see in the same degree; so that the occurrence of sight, as such, to

[1] [And also § 4 of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding.*]
[2] [So in Locke and in the ed. of 1888; "subjects" in earlier editions.]

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the eye, is only the continuance of its necessary state of action, and awakes no attention whatsoever, except by the particular nature and quality of the sight. And thus, unless the minds of men are particularly directed to the impressions of sight, objects pass perpetually before the eyes without conveying any impression to the brain at all; and so pass actually unseen, not merely unnoticed, but in the full clear sense of the word unseen. And numbers of men being preoccupied with business or care of some description, totally unconnected with the impressions of sight, such is actually the case with them; they receiving from nature only the inevitable sensations of blueness, redness, darkness, light, etc., and except at particular and rare moments, no more whatsoever.

§ 3. But more or less in proportion to their natural sensibility to what is beautiful.

The degree of ignorance of external nature in which men may thus remain depends, therefore, partly on the number and character of the subjects with which their minds may be otherwise occupied, and partly on a natural want of sensibility to the power of beauty of form, and the other attributes of external objects. I do not think that there is ever such absolute incapacity in the eye for distinguishing and receiving pleasure from certain forms and colours, as there is in persons who are technically said to have no ear for distinguishing notes; but there is naturally every degree of bluntness and acuteness, both for perceiving the truth of form, and for receiving pleasure from it when perceived. And although I believe even the lowest degree of these faculties can be expanded almost unlimitedly by cultivation, the pleasure received rewards not the labour necessary, and the pursuit is abandoned. So that while in those whose sensations are naturally acute and vivid, the call of external nature is so strong that it must be obeyed, and is ever heard louder as the approach to her is nearer,—

§ 4. Connected with a perfect state of moral feeling.

in those whose sensations are naturally blunt, the call is overpowered at once by other thoughts, and their faculties of perception, weak originally, die of disuse. With this kind of bodily sensibility to colour and form is intimately connected that higher sensibility

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which we revere as one of the chief attributes of all noble minds, and as the chief spring of real poetry. I believe this kind of sensibility may be entirely resolved into the acuteness of bodily sense of which I have been speaking, associated with love, love I mean in its infinite and holy functions, as it embraces divine and human and brutal intelligences, and hallows the physical perception of external objects by association, gratitude, veneration, and other pure feelings of our moral nature. And although the discovery of truth is in itself altogether intellectual, and dependent merely on our powers of physical perception and abstract intellect, wholly independent of our moral nature, yet these instruments (perception and judgment) are so sharpened and brightened, and so far more swiftly and effectively used, when they have the energy and passion of our moral nature to bring them into action—perception is so quickened by love, and judgment so tempered by veneration, that, practically, a man of deadened moral sensation is always dull in his perception of truth; and thousands of the highest and most divine truths of nature are wholly concealed from him, however constant and indefatigable may be his intellectual search. Thus, then, the farther we look, the more we are limited in the number of those to whom we should choose to appeal as judges of truth, and the more we perceive how great a number of mankind may be partially incapacitated from either discovering or feeling it.

§ 5. And of the intellectual powers.

Next to sensibility, which is necessary for the perception of facts, come reflection and memory, which are necessary for the retention of them, and recognition of their resemblances. For a man may receive impression after impression, and that vividly and with delight, and yet, if he take no care to reason upon those impressions, and trace them to their sources, he may remain totally ignorant of the facts that produced them; nay, may attribute them to facts with which they have no connection, or may coin causes for them that have no existence at all. And the more sensibility and imagination a man possesses, the more likely will he be to fall into error; for then he will see whatever he

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expects, and admire and judge with his heart, and not with his eyes. How many people are misled, by what has been said and sung of the serenity of Italian skies, to suppose they must be more *blue* than the skies of the north, and think that they see them so; whereas the sky of Italy is far more dull and grey in colour than the skies of the north, and is distinguished only by its intense repose of light. And this is confirmed by Benvenuto Cellini, who, on his first entering France, is especially struck with the clearness of the sky, as contrasted with the *mist* of Italy.[1] And what is more strange still, when people see in a painting what they suppose to have been the source of their impressions, they will affirm it to be truthful, though they feel no such impression resulting from it. Thus, though day after day they may have been impressed by the tone and warmth of an Italian sky, yet not having traced the feeling to its source, and supposing themselves impressed by its *blueness*, they will affirm a blue sky in a painting to be truthful, and reject the most faithful rendering of all the real attributes of Italy as cold or dull. And this influence of the imagination over the senses, is peculiarly observable in the perpetual disposition of mankind to suppose that they *see* what they *know*, and *vice versâ* in their not seeing what they do not know. Thus, if a child be asked to draw the corner of a house, he will lay down something in the form of the letter T. He has no conception that the two lines of the roof, which he knows to be level, produce on his eye the impression of a slope. It requires repeated and close attention before he detects this fact, or can be made to feel that the lines on his paper are false. And the Chinese, children in all things, suppose a good perspective drawing to be as false as we feel their plate patterns to be, or wonder at the strange buildings which come to a point at the end. And all the early works, whether of nations or of men, show, by their want of

§ 6. *How sight depends upon previous knowledge.*

[1] [In describing a miraculous aureole of glory which rested on his head, Benvenuto says: "I became aware of it in France at Paris; for the air in those parts is so much freer from mist, that one can see it there far better manifested than in Italy, mists being far more frequent among us" (*Life*, book i. ch. 128).]

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shade, how little the eye, without knowledge, is to be depended upon to discover truth. The eye of a red Indian, keen enough to find the trace of his enemy or his prey, even in the unnatural turn of a trodden leaf, is yet so blunt to the impressions of shade, that Mr. Catlin mentions his once having been in great danger from having painted a portrait with the face in half light, which the untutored observers imagined and affirmed to be the painting of half a face.[1] Barry, in his sixth Lecture, takes notice of the same want of actual *sight* in the early painters of Italy. "The imitations," he says, "of early art are like those of children,—nothing is seen in the spectacle before us, unless it be previously known and sought for; and numberless observable differences between the age of ignorance and that of knowledge, show how much the contraction or extension of our sphere of vision depends upon other considerations than the mere returns of our natural optics."[2] And the deception which takes place so broadly in cases like these, has infinitely greater influence over our judgment of the more intricate and less tangible truths of nature. We are constantly supposing that we see what experience only has shown us, or can show us, to have existence, constantly missing the sight of what we do not know beforehand to be visible: and painters, to the last hour of their lives, are apt to fall in some degree into the error of painting what exists, rather than what they can see. I shall prove the extent of this error more completely hereafter.

Be it also observed, that all these difficulties would lie in the way, even if the truths of nature were always the same, constantly repeated and brought before us. But the truths of nature are one eternal change—one infinite variety. There is

[1] [George Catlin, an American artist, whose gallery of portraits of the North American Indians was exhibited in 1841 in the Egyptian Hall, and afterwards on the Continent. The exciting story referred to in the text may be read in his *Letters and Notes on . . . the North American Indians*, 1841, ii. pp. 190–194, and *cf.* the *Descriptive Catalogue of Catlin's Indian Gallery*, s. No. 86. Three distinguished braves were killed in a private quarrel, which arose from the artist painting one of them almost in profile, throwing a part of the face into shadow. "He is but half a man," cried one of the bystanders; whereupon, after some exchange of insults, fire-arms were resorted to.]

[2] [Lecture vi., on Colouring, in *The Works of James Barry, Esq., Historical Painter*, 2 vols., 1809, vol. i. p. 521.]

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no bush on the face of the globe exactly like another bush;—there are no two trees in the forest whose boughs bend into the same network, nor two leaves on the same tree which could not be told one from the other, nor two waves in the sea exactly alike. And out of this mass of various, yet agreeing beauty, it is by long attention only that the conception of the constant character—the ideal form—hinted at by all, yet assumed by none, is fixed upon the imagination for its standard of truth.

§ 7. The difficulty increased by the variety of truths in nature.

It is not singular, therefore, nor in any way disgraceful, that the majority of spectators are totally incapable of appreciating the truth of nature, when fully set before them; but it is both singular and disgraceful that it is so difficult to convince them of their own incapability. Ask a connoisseur who has scampered over all Europe, the shape of the leaf of an elm, and the chances are ninety to one that he cannot tell you; and yet he will be voluble of criticism on every painted landscape from Dresden to Madrid, and pretend to tell you whether they are like nature or not. Ask an enthusiastic chatterer in the Sistine Chapel how many ribs he has, and you get no answer: but it is odds that you do not get out of the door without his informing you that he considers such and such a figure badly drawn.

A few such interrogations as these might indeed convict, if not convince the mass of spectators of incapability, were it not for the universal reply, that they can recognize what they cannot describe, and feel what is truthful, though they do not know what is truth. And this is, to a certain degree, true. A man may recognize the portrait of his friend, though he cannot, if you ask him apart, tell you the shape of his nose, or the height of his forehead: and every one could tell nature herself from an imitation; why not then, it will be asked, what is like her from what is not? For this simple reason; that we constantly recognize things by their least important attributes, and by help of very few of those: and if these attributes exist not in the imitation, though there may be thousands of others

§ 8. We recognize objects by their least important attributes. Part I. Sec. I. Chap. IV.

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far higher and more valuable, yet if those be wanting, or imperfectly rendered, by which we are accustomed to recognize the object, we deny the likeness; while if these be given, though all the great and valuable and important attributes may be wanting, we affirm the likeness. Recognition is no proof of real and intrinsic resemblance. We recognize our books by their bindings, though the true and essential characteristics lie inside. A man is known to his dog by the smell, to his tailor by the coat, to his friend by the smile: each of these knows him, but how little, or how much, depends on the dignity of the intelligence. That which is truly and indeed characteristic of the man, is known only to God. One portrait of a man may possess exact accuracy of feature, and no atom of expression; it may be, to use the ordinary terms of admiration bestowed on such portraits by those whom they please, "as like as it can stare." Everybody, down to his cat, would know this. Another portrait may have neglected or misrepresented the features, but may have given the flash of the eye, and the peculiar radiance of the lip, seen on him only in his hours of highest mental excitement. None but his friends would know this. Another may have given none of his ordinary expressions, but one which he wore in the most excited instant of his life, when all his secret passions and all his highest powers were brought into play at once. None but those who had then seen him might recognize *this* as like. But which would be the most truthful portrait of the *man?*[1] The first gives the accidents of body—the sport of climate, and food, and time,—which corruption inhabits, and the worm waits for. The second gives the stamp of the soul upon the flesh; but it is the soul seen in the emotions which it shares with many, which may not be characteristic of its essence—the results of habit, and education, and accident,—a gloze, whether purposely

[1] [So Tennyson in "Lancelot and Elaine":—

"As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest.]

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worn or unconsciously assumed, perhaps totally contrary to all that is rooted and real in the mind which it conceals. The third has caught the trace of all that was most hidden and most mighty, when all hypocrisy and all habit, and all petty and passing emotion,—the ice, and the bank, and the foam of the immortal river,—were shivered, and broken, and swallowed up in the awakening of its inward strength; when the call and claim of some divine motive had brought into visible being those latent forces and feelings which the spirit's own volition could not summon, nor its consciousness comprehend, which God only knew, and God only could awaken,—the depth and the mystery of its peculiar and separating attributes. And so it is with external nature: she has a body and a soul like man; but her soul is the Deity. It is possible to represent the body without the spirit; and this shall be like, to those whose senses are only cognizant of body. It is possible to represent the spirit in its ordinary and inferior manifestations; and this shall be like, to those who have not watched for its moments of power. It is possible to represent the spirit in its secret and high operations; and this shall be like, only to those to whose watching they have been revealed. All these are truth; but according to the dignity of the truths he can represent or feel, is the power of the painter,—the justice of the judge.

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CHAPTER III

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS:—FIRST, THAT PARTICULAR TRUTHS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN GENERAL ONES

I HAVE in the last chapter affirmed that we usually recognize objects by the least essential characteristics. This very naturally excites the inquiry, what I consider their important characteristics, and why I call one truth more important than another. And this question must be immediately determined, because it is evident, that in judging of the truth of painters, we shall have to consider not only the accuracy with which individual truths are given, but the relative importance of the truths themselves; for as it constantly happens that the powers of art are unable to render *all* truths, that artist must be considered the most truthful who has preserved the most important at the expense of the most trifling.

§ 1. *Necessity of determining the relative importance of truths.*

Now, if we are to begin our investigation in Aristotle's way, and look at the φαινόμενα of the subject, we shall immediately stumble over a maxim which is in everybody's mouth, and which, as it is understood in practice, is true and useful; as it is usually applied in argument, false and misleading. "General truths are more important than particular ones."[1] Often, when, in conversation, I have been praising Turner for his perpetual variety, and for giving so particular and separate a character to each of his compositions, that the mind of the painter can only be estimated by seeing all that he has ever done, and that nothing can be prophesied of a

§ 2. *Misapplication of the aphorism: "General truths are more important than particular ones."*

[1] [So Reynolds in the fourth of his *Discourses:* "Perfect form is produced by leaving out particularities, and retaining only general ideas."]

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picture coming into existence on his easel, but that it will be totally different in idea from all that he has ever done before; and when I have opposed this inexhaustible knowledge or imagination, whichever it may be, to the perpetual repetition of some half-dozen conceptions by Claude and Poussin, I have been met by the formidable objection, enunciated with much dignity and self-satisfaction on the part of my antagonist,—"That is not painting general truths, that is painting particular truths." Now there must be something wrong in that application of a principle which would make the variety and abundance which we look for as the greatest sign of intellect in the writer, the greatest sign of error in the painter; and we shall accordingly see, by an application of it to other matters, that taken without limitation, the whole proposition is utterly false. For instance, Mrs. Jameson somewhere mentions the exclamation of a lady of her acquaintance, more desirous to fill a pause in conversation than abundant in sources of observation,—"What an excellent book the Bible is!" This was a very general truth indeed—a truth predicable of the Bible in common with many other books, but it certainly is neither striking nor important. Had the lady exclaimed,—"How evidently is the Bible a divine revelation!" she would have expressed a particular truth, one predicable of the Bible only; but certainly far more interesting and important. Had she, on the contrary, informed us that the Bible was a book, she would have been still more general, and still less entertaining. If I ask any one who somebody else is, and receive for answer that he is a man, I get little satisfaction for my pains; but if I am told that he is Sir Isaac Newton, I immediately thank my neighbour for his information. The fact is, and the above instances may serve at once to prove it if it be not self-evident, that generality gives importance to the *subject*, and limitation or particularity to the *predicate*. If I say that such and such a man in China is an opium-eater, I say nothing very interesting, because my subject (such a man) is particular:

§ 3. Falseness of this maxim, taken without explanation.

§ 4. Generality important in the subject, particularity in the predicate.

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If I say that all men in China are opium-eaters, I say something interesting, because my subject (all men) is general. If I say that all men in China eat, I say nothing interesting, because my predicate (eat) is general. If I say that all men in China eat opium, I say something interesting, because my predicate (eat opium) is particular.

Now almost everything which (with reference to a given subject) a painter has to ask himself whether he shall represent or not, is a predicate. Hence, in art, particular truths are usually more important than general ones.

How is it then that anything so plain as this should be contradicted by one of the most universally received aphorisms respecting art? A little reflection will show us under what limitations this maxim may be true in practice.

§ 5. The importance of truths of species is not owing to their generality.

It is self-evident that when we are painting or describing anything, those truths must be the most important which are most characteristic of what is to be told or represented. Now that which is first and most broadly characteristic of a thing is that which distinguishes its genus, or which makes it what it is. For instance, that which makes drapery *be* drapery, is not its being made of silk, or worsted, or flax, for things are made of all these which are not drapery, but the ideas peculiar to drapery; the properties which, when inherent in a thing, make it drapery, are extension, non-elastic flexibility, unity, and comparative thinness. Everything which has these properties, a waterfall, for instance, if united and extended, or a net of weeds over a wall, is drapery, as much as silk or woollen stuff is. So that these ideas separate drapery in our minds from everything else; they are peculiarly characteristic of it, and therefore are the most important group of ideas connected with it; and so with everything else, that which makes the thing what it is, is the most important idea, or group of ideas, connected with the thing. But as this idea must necessarily be common to all individuals of the species it belongs to, it is a general idea with respect to that species; while other ideas, which are not characteristic of the species, and are therefore

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in reality general (as black and white are terms applicable to more things than drapery), are yet particular with respect to that species, being predicable only of certain individuals of it. Hence it is carelessly and falsely said that general ideas are more important than particular ones; carelessly and falsely, I say, because the so-called general idea is important, not because it is common to all the individuals of that species, but because it separates that species from everything else. It is the distinctiveness, not the universality of the truth, which renders it important. And the so-called particular idea is unimportant, not because it is not predicable of the whole species, but because it *is* predicable of things out of that species. It is not its individuality, but its generality, which renders it unimportant. So then truths are important just in proportion as they are characteristic; and are valuable, primarily, as they separate the species from all other created things; secondarily, as they separate the individuals of that species from one another. Thus "silken" and "woollen" are unimportant ideas with respect to drapery, because they neither separate the species from other things, nor even the individuals of that species from one another, since, though not common to the whole of it, they are common to indefinite numbers of it; but the particular folds into which any piece of drapery may happen to fall, being different in many particulars from those into which any other piece of drapery will fall, are expressive not only of the characters of the species (flexibility, non-elasticity, etc.), but of individuality, and definite character in the case immediately observed, and are consequently most important and necessary ideas. So in a man, to be short-legged or long-nosed, or anything else of accidental quality, does not distinguish him from other short-legged or long-nosed animals; but the important truths respecting a man are, first, the marked development of that distinctive organization which separates him as man from other animals, and secondly, that group of qualities which distinguishes the individual from all other men, which makes him Paul or Judas, Newton or Shakspeare.

§ 6. *All truths valuable as they are characteristic.*

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Such are the real sources of importance to truths, as far as they are considered with reference merely to their being general or particular; but there are other sources of importance which give farther weight to the ordinary opinion of the greater value of those which are general, and which render this opinion right in practice; I mean the intrinsic beauty of the truths themselves, a quality which it is not here the place to investigate, but which must just be noticed, as invariably adding value to truths of species rather than to those of individuality. The qualities and properties which characterize man or any other animal as a species, are the perfection of his or its form and mind, almost all individual differences arising from imperfections; hence a truth of species is the more valuable to art, because it must always be a beauty, while a truth of individuals is commonly, in some sort of way, a defect.

§ 7. *Otherwise truths of species are valuable because beautiful.*

Again, a truth which may be of great interest when an object is viewed by itself, may be objectionable when it is viewed in relation to other objects. Thus if we were painting a piece of drapery as our whole subject, it would be proper to give in it every source of entertainment which particular truths could supply—to give it varied colour and delicate texture; but if we paint this same piece of drapery as part of the dress of a Madonna, all these ideas of richness or texture become thoroughly contemptible, and unfit to occupy the mind at the same moment with the idea of the Virgin. The conception of drapery is then to be suggested by the simplest and slightest means possible, and all notions of texture and detail are to be rejected with utter reprobation; but this, observe, is not because they are particular or general or anything else, with respect to the drapery itself, but because they draw the attention to the dress instead of the saint, and disturb and degrade the imagination and the feelings; hence we ought to give the conception of the drapery in the most unobtrusive way possible, by rendering those essential qualities distinctly,

§ 8. *And many truths, valuable if separate, may be objectionable in connection with others.*

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which are necessary to the very existence of drapery, and not one more.

With these last two sources of the importance of truths we have nothing to do at present, as they are dependent upon ideas of beauty and relation: I merely allude to them now, to show that all that is alleged by Sir J. Reynolds and other scientific writers, respecting the kind of truths proper to be represented by the painter or sculptor, is perfectly just and right; while yet the principle on which they base their selection (that general truths are more important than particular ones) is altogether false. Canova's Perseus in the Vatican[1] is entirely spoiled by an unlucky *tassel* in the folds of the mantle (which the next admirer of Canova who passes would do well to knock off);[2] but it is spoiled, not because this is a particular truth, but because it is a contemptible, unnecessary, and ugly truth. The button which fastens the vest of the Sistine Daniel[3] is as much a particular truth as this, but it is a necessary one, and the idea of it is given by the simplest possible means; hence it is right and beautiful.

§ 9. *Recapitulation.*

Finally, then, it is to be remembered that all truths, as far as their being particular or general affects their value at all, are valuable in proportion as they are particular, and valueless in proportion as they are general, or to express the proposition in simpler terms, every truth is valuable in proportion as it is characteristic of the thing of which it is affirmed.

[1] [Perseus and the two boxers, Creugas and Damoxenus; in the First Cabinet of the Cortile del Belvedere. "The admiration of Canova," says Ruskin elsewhere, "I hold to be one of the most deadly symptoms in the civilization of the upper classes" (*Stones of Venice*, vol. i. ch. xx. § 11 *n.*]

[2] [In his copy for revision Ruskin is less iconoclastic, and omits these words.]

[3] [One of the Prophets, by Michael Angelo.]

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CHAPTER IV

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS:—SECONDLY, THAT RARE TRUTHS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN FREQUENT ONES

§ 1. No accidental violation of nature's principles should be represented.

It will be necessary next for us to determine how far frequency or rarity can affect the importance of truths, and whether the artist is to be considered the most truthful who paints what is common or what is unusual in nature.

Now the whole determination of this question depends upon whether the unusual fact be a violation of nature's general principles, or the application of some of those principles in a peculiar and striking way. Nature sometimes, though very rarely, violates her own principles; it is her principle to make everything beautiful, but now and then for an instant, she permits what, compared with the rest of her works, might be called ugly: it is true that even these rare blemishes are permitted, as I have above said, for a good purpose (Part I. Sec. I. Chap. VI.); they are valuable in nature, and used as she uses them, are equally valuable (as instantaneous discords) in art; but the artist who should seek after these exclusively, and paint nothing else, though he might be able to point to something in nature as the original of every one of his uglinesses, would yet be, in the strict sense of the word, false,—false to nature, and disobedient to her laws. For instance, it is the practice of nature to give character to the outlines of her clouds by perpetual angles and right lines. Perhaps once in a month, by diligent watching, we might be able to see a cloud altogether rounded and made up of curves; but the artist who paints nothing but curved clouds must yet be considered thoroughly and inexcusably false.

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But the case is widely different, when instead of a principle violated, we have one extraordinarily carried out or manifested under unusual circumstances. Though nature is constantly beautiful, she does not exhibit her highest powers of beauty constantly, for then they would satiate us and pall upon our senses. It is necessary to their appreciation that they should be rarely shown. Her finest touches are things which must be watched for; her most perfect passages of beauty are the most evanescent. She is constantly doing something beautiful for us, but it is something which she has not done before and will not do again; some exhibition of her general powers in particular circumstances, which, if we do not catch at the instant it is passing, will not be repeated for us. Now they are these evanescent passages of perfected beauty, these perpetually varied examples of utmost power, which the artist ought to seek for and arrest. No supposition can be more absurd than that effects or truths frequently exhibited are more characteristic of nature than those which are equally necessary by her laws, though rarer in occurrence. Both the frequent and the rare are parts of the same great system; to give either exclusively is imperfect truth, and to repeat the same effect or thought in two pictures is wasted life. What should we think of a poet who should keep all his life repeating the same thought in different words? and why should we be more lenient to the parrot painter, who has learned one lesson from the page of nature, and keeps stammering it out in eternal repetition, without turning the leaf? Is it less tautology to describe a thing over and over again with lines, than it is with words? The teaching of nature is as varied and infinite as it is constant; and the duty of the painter is to watch for every one of her lessons, and to give (for human life will admit of nothing more) those in which she has manifested each of her principles in the most peculiar and striking way. The deeper his research and the rarer the phenomena he has noted, the more valuable will his works be; to repeat

§ 2. But the cases in which those principles have been strikingly exemplified.

§ 3. Which are comparatively rare.

§ 4. All repetition is blamable.

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himself, even in a single instance, is treachery to nature, for a thousand human lives would not be enough to give one instance of the perfect manifestation of each of her powers; and as for combining or classifying them, as well might a preacher expect in one sermon to express and explain every divine truth which can be gathered out of God's revelation, as a painter expect in one composition to express and illustrate every lesson which can be received from God's creation. Both are commentators on infinity, and the duty of both is to take for each discourse one essential truth, seeking particularly and insisting especially on those which are less palpable to ordinary observation, and more likely to escape an indolent research; and to impress that, and that alone, upon those whom they address, with every illustration that can be furnished by their knowledge, and every adornment attainable by their power. And the real truthfulness of the painter is in proportion to the number and variety of the facts he has so illustrated; those facts being always, as above observed, the realization, not the violation of a general principle. The quantity of truth is in proportion to the number of such facts, and its value and instructiveness in proportion to their rarity. All really great pictures, therefore, exhibit the general habits of nature, manifested in some peculiar, rare, and beautiful way.

§ 5. The duty of the painter is the same as that of a preacher.

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CHAPTER V

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS:—THIRDLY, THAT TRUTHS OF COLOUR ARE THE LEAST IMPORTANT OF ALL TRUTHS

§ 1. Difference between primary and secondary qualities in bodies.

In the last two chapters, we have pointed out general tests of the importance of all truths, which will be sufficient at once to distinguish certain classes of properties in bodies as more necessary to be told than others, because more characteristic, either of the particular thing to be represented, or of the principles of nature.

According to Locke, book ii. chap. 8, there are three sorts of qualities in bodies: first, the "bulk, figure, number, situation, and motion or rest of their solid parts: those" that "are in them, whether we perceive them or no." These he calls primary qualities. Secondly, "the power that is in any body to operate after a peculiar manner on any of our senses" (sensible qualities). And thirdly, "the power that is in any body to make such a change in another body as that it shall operate on our senses differently from what it did before:" these last being "usually called *powers*."

§ 2. The first are fully characteristic; the second imperfectly so.

Hence he proceeds to prove that those which he calls primary qualities are indeed part of the essence of the body, and characteristic of it; but that the two other kinds of qualities which together he calls secondary, are neither of them more than *powers* of producing on other objects, or in us, certain effects and sensations. Now a power of influence is always equally characteristic of two objects—the active and passive; for it is as much necessary that there should be a power in the object suffering to receive the impression, as in the object acting, to give the

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impression. (Compare Locke, book ii. chap. 21, sect. 2.) For supposing two people, as is frequently the case, perceive different scents in the same flower, it is evident that the power in the flower to give this or that depends on the nature of their nerves, as well as on that of its own particles; and that we are as correct in saying it is a power in us to perceive, as in the object to impress. Every power, therefore, being characteristic of the nature of two bodies, is imperfectly and incompletely characteristic of either separately; but the primary qualities being characteristic only of the body in which they are inherent, are the most important truths connected with it. For the question what the thing *is*, must precede, and be of more importance than the question, what it can do.

§ 3. Colour is a secondary quality, therefore less important than form.

Now, by Locke's definition above given, only bulk, figure, situation, and motion or rest of solid parts, are primary qualities. Hence all truths of colour sink at once into the second rank. He, therefore, who has neglected a truth of form for a truth of colour has neglected a greater truth for a less one.

And that colour is indeed a most unimportant characteristic of objects, will be farther evident on the slightest consideration. The colour of plants is constantly changing with the season, and of everything with the quality of light falling on it; but the nature and essence of the thing are independent of these changes. An oak is an oak, whether green with spring or red with winter; a dahlia is a dahlia, whether it be yellow or crimson; and if some monster-hunting florist should ever frighten the flower blue, still it will be a dahlia; but not so if the same arbitrary changes could be effected in its form. Let the roughness of the bark and the angles of the boughs be smoothed or diminished, and the oak ceases to be an oak; but let it retain its inward structure and outward form, and though its leaves grew white, or pink, or blue, or tricolour, it would be a white oak, or a pink oak, or a republican oak, but an oak still. Again, colour is hardly ever even a *possible* distinction between two objects of the same species. Two trees, of the same kind, at the same season, and of the same age, are of

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absolutely the same colour; but they are not of the same form, nor anything like it. There can be no difference in the colour of two pieces of rock broken from the same place; but it is impossible they should be of the same form. So that form is not only the chief characteristic of species, but the only characteristic of individuals of a species.

§ 4. Colour no distinction between objects of the same species.

Again, a colour, in association with other colours, is different from the same colour seen by itself. It has a distinct and peculiar power upon the retina dependent on its association. Consequently, the colour of any object is not more dependent upon the nature of the object itself, and the eye beholding it, than on the colour of the objects near it; in this respect also, therefore, it is no characteristic.

§ 5. And different in association from what it is alone.

And so great is the uncertainty with respect to those qualities or powers which depend as much on the nature of the object suffering as of the object acting, that it is totally impossible to prove that one man sees in the same thing the same colour that another does, though he may use the same name for it. One man may see yellow where another sees blue, but as the effect is constant, they agree in the term to be used for it, and both call it blue, or both yellow, having yet totally different ideas attached to the term. And yet neither can be said to see falsely, because the colour is not in the thing, but in the thing and them together. But if they see forms differently, one must see falsely, because the form is positive in the object. My friend may see boars blue for anything I know, but it is impossible he should see them with paws instead of hoofs, unless his eyes or brain be diseased. (Compare Locke, book ii. chap. 32 § 15.) But I do not speak of this uncertainty as capable of having any effect on art, because, though perhaps Landseer sees dogs of the colour which I should call blue, yet the colour he puts on the canvas, being in the same way blue to him, will still be brown or dog-colour to me; and so we may argue on points of colour just as

§ 6. It is not certain whether any two people see the same colours in things.

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if all men saw alike, as indeed in all probability they do; but I merely mention this uncertainty to show farther the vagueness and unimportance of colour as a characteristic of bodies.

§ 7. Form, considered as an element of landscape, includes light and shade.

Before going farther, however, I must explain the sense in which I have used the word "form," because painters have a most inaccurate and careless habit of confining this term to the *outline* of bodies, whereas it necessarily implies light and shade. It is true that the outline and the chiaroscuro must be separate subjects of investigation with the student; but no form whatsoever can be known to the eye in the slightest degree without its chiaroscuro; and, therefore, in speaking of form generally as an element of landscape, I mean that perfect and harmonious unity of outline with light and shade, by which all the parts and projections and proportions of a body are fully explained to the eye; being nevertheless perfectly independent of sight or power in other objects, the presence of light upon a body being a positive existence, whether we are aware of it or not, and in no degree dependent upon our senses. This being understood, the most convincing proof of the unimportance of colour lies in the accurate observation of the way in which any material object impresses itself on the mind. If we look at nature carefully, we shall find that her colours are in a state of perpetual confusion and indistinctness, while her forms, as told by light and shade, are invariably clear, distinct, and speaking. The stones and gravel of the bank catch green reflections from the boughs above; the bushes receive greys and yellows from the ground; every hair's breadth of polished surface gives a little bit of the blue of the sky, or the gold of the sun, like a star upon the local colour; this local colour, changeful and uncertain in itself, is again disguised and modified by the hue of the light,[1] or quenched in the grey of the shadow; and the confusion and blending of tint are altogether so great, that were we left to

§ 8. Importance of light and shade in expressing the character of bodies, and unimportance of colour.

[1] [See *Notes on . . . the Royal Academy*, 1855, supplement, where Ruskin further explains this passage and compares it with sec. ii. ch. i. § 18, below.]

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find out what objects were by their colours only, we could scarcely in places distinguish the boughs of a tree from the air beyond them, or the ground beneath them. I know that people unpractised in art will not believe this at first; but if they have accurate powers of observation, they may soon ascertain it for themselves; they will find that while they can scarcely ever determine the *exact* hue of anything, except when it occurs in large masses, as in a green field or the blue sky, the form, as told by light and shade, is always decided and evident, and the source of the chief character of every object. Light and shade indeed so completely conquer the distinctions of local colour, that the difference in hue between the illumined parts of a white and of a black object is not so great as the difference (in sunshine) between the illumined and dark side of either separately.

§ 9. *Recapitulation.*

We shall see hereafter, in considering ideas of beauty, that colour, even as a source of pleasure, is feeble compared with form; but this we cannot insist upon at present: we have only to do with simple truth, and the observations we have made are sufficient to prove that the artist who sacrifices or forgets a truth of form in the pursuit of a truth of colour, sacrifices what is definite to what is uncertain, and what is essential to what is accidental.[1]

[1] [The comparative unimportance ascribed in this chapter to colour must be understood strictly in relation to the question proposed—namely, whether form or colour is the more important in explaining the essential characteristics of objects. For the necessary additions to the statement of the case here made, see *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. iii. § 24, and vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi. § 8 (where Ruskin collects and connects his various statements respecting colour). In his copy for revision he noted at the end of this chapter, "Now insert new passage."]

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CHAPTER VI

RECAPITULATION

It ought farther to be observed respecting truths in general, that those are always most valuable which are most historical; that is, which tell us most about the past and future states of the object to which they belong. In a tree, for instance, it is more important to give the appearance of energy and elasticity in the limbs which is indicative of growth and life, than any particular character of leaf, or texture of bough. It is more important that we should feel that the uppermost sprays are creeping higher and higher into the sky, and be impressed with the current of life and motion which is animating every fibre, than that we should know the exact pitch of relief with which those fibres are thrown out against the sky. For the first truths tell us tales about the tree, about what it has been, and will be, while the last are characteristic of it only in its present state, and are in no way talkative about themselves. Talkative facts are always more interesting and more important than silent ones. So again the lines in a crag which mark its stratification, and how it has been washed and rounded by water, or twisted and drawn out in fire, are more important, because they tell more than the stains of the lichens which change year by year, and the accidental fissures of frost or decomposition; not but that both of these are historical, but historical in a less distinct manner, and for shorter periods.

§ 1. *The importance of historical truths.*

Hence in general the truths of specific form are the first and most important of all; and next to them, those truths of chiaroscuro which are necessary to make us understand every quality and part of forms, and the relative distances of

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objects among each other, and in consequence their relative bulks. Altogether lower than these as truths, though often most important as beauties, stand all effects of chiaroscuro which are productive merely of imitations of light and tone, and all effects of colour. To make us understand the *space* of the sky, is an end worthy of the artist's highest powers; to hit its particular blue or gold is an end to be thought of when we have accomplished the first, and not till then.

§ 2. Form, as explained by light and shade, the first of all truths. Tone, light, and colour, are secondary.

Finally, far below all these come those particular accuracies or tricks of chiaroscuro which cause objects to look projecting from the canvas, not worthy of the name of truths, because they require for their attainment the sacrifice of all others; for not having at our disposal the same intensity of light by which nature illustrates her objects, we are obliged, if we would have perfect deception in one, to destroy its relation to the rest. (Compare Part I. Sect. I. Chap. V.) And thus he who throws one object out of his picture, never lets the spectator into it. Michael Angelo bids you follow his phantoms into the abyss of heaven, but a modern French painter drops his hero out of the picture frame.

§ 3. And deceptive chiaroscuro the lowest of all.

This solidity or projection, then, is the very lowest truth that art can give; it is the painting of mere matter, giving that as food for the eye which is properly only the subject of touch; it can neither instruct nor exalt; nor can it please, except as jugglery; it addresses no sense of beauty nor of power; and wherever it characterizes the general aim of a picture, it is the sign and the evidence of the vilest and lowest mechanism which art can be insulted by giving name to.

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CHAPTER VII

GENERAL APPLICATION OF THE FOREGOING PRINCIPLES

§ 1. The different selection of facts consequent on the several aims at imitation or at truth.

We have seen, in the preceding chapters, some proof of what was before asserted, that the truths necessary for deceptive imitation are not only few, but of the very lowest order. We thus find painters ranging themselves into two great classes: one aiming at the development of the exquisite truths of specific form, refined colour, and ethereal space, and content with the clear and impressive suggestion of any of these, by whatsoever means obtained; and the other casting all these aside, to attain those particular truths of tone and chiaroscuro, which may trick the spectator into a belief of reality. The first class, if they have to paint a tree, are intent upon giving the exquisite designs of intersecting undulation in its boughs, the grace of its leafage, the intricacy of its organization, and all those qualities which make it lovely or affecting of its kind. The second endeavour only to make you believe that you are looking at wood. They are totally regardless of truths or beauties of form; a stump is as good as a trunk for all their purposes, so that they can only deceive the eye into the supposition that it *is* a stump and not canvas.

§ 2. The old masters, as a body, aim only at imitation.

To which of these classes the great body of the old landscape painters belonged, may be partly gathered from the kind of praise which is bestowed upon them by those who admire them most, which either refers to technical matters, dexterity of touch, clever oppositions of colour, etc., or is bestowed on the power of the painter to *deceive*. M. de Marmontel, going into a connoisseur's gallery, pretends to mistake a fine Berghem for a window. This, he says, was affirmed by its possessor

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to be the greatest praise the picture had ever received.[1] Such is indeed the notion of art which is at the bottom of the veneration usually felt for the old landscape painters; it is of course the palpable, first idea of ignorance; it is the only notion which people unacquainted with art can by any possibility have of its ends; the only test by which people unacquainted with nature can pretend to form anything like judgment of art.[2] It is strange, that, with the great historical painters of Italy before them, who had broken so boldly and indignantly from the trammels of this notion, and shaken the very dust of it from their feet, the succeeding landscape painters should have wasted their lives in jugglery: but so it is, and so it will be felt, the more we look into their works, that the deception of the senses was the great and first end of all their art. To attain this they paid deep and serious attention to effects of light and tone, and to the exact degree of relief which material objects take against light and atmosphere; and sacrificing every other truth to these, not necessarily, but because they required no others for deception, they succeeded in rendering these particular facts with a fidelity and force which, in the pictures that have come down to us uninjured, are as yet unequalled, and never can be surpassed. They painted their foregrounds with laborious industry, covering them with details so as to render them deceptive to the ordinary eye, regardless of beauty or truth in the details themselves; they painted their trees with careful attention to their pitch of shade against the sky, utterly regardless of all that is beautiful or essential in the anatomy of their foliage and boughs; they painted their

§ 3. *What truths they gave.*

[1] ["At Brussels I was curious to see a rich collection of pictures. . . . The first picture he pointed out was a very fine landscape by Berghem. 'Ah!' exclaimed I, 'I took that picture at first for a window through which I saw the country and these beautiful flocks.' 'This,' said he, with transport, 'is the finest praise ever given to that picture'" (*Memoirs of Marmontel, written by himself*, book viii.). With Marmontel Ruskin came to feel himself in peculiar sympathy; see *Sesame and Lilies* (pref. to 1871 ed.), and *Fors Clavigera*, Letter xvii.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 read:—

"judgment of art. We have no eye for colour—we perceive no intention in composition—we do not know anything about form—we cannot estimate excellence—we do not care for beauty—but we know whether it deceives. It is a strange thing that . . ."]

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distances with exquisite use of transparent colour and aërial tone, totally neglectful of all facts and forms which nature uses such colour and tone to relieve and adorn. They had neither love of nature, nor feeling of her beauty; they looked for her coldest and most commonplace effects, because they were easiest to imitate; and for her most vulgar forms, because they were most easily to be recognized by the untaught eyes of those whom alone they could hope to please; they did it, like the Pharisee of old, to be seen of men, and they had their reward. They do deceive and delight the unpractised eye. They will to all ages, as long as their colours endure, be the standards of excellence with all who, ignorant of nature, claim to be thought learned in art: and they will to all ages be, to those who have thorough love and knowledge of the creation which they libel, instructive proofs of the limited number and low character of the truths which are necessary, and the accumulated multitude of pure, broad, bold falsehoods which are admissible, in pictures meant only to deceive.

There is, of course, more or less accuracy of knowledge and execution combined with this aim at effect, according to the industry and precision of eye possessed by the master, and more or less of beauty in the forms selected, according to his natural taste; but both the beauty and truth are sacrificed unhesitatingly where they interfere with the great effort of deception. Claude had, if it had been cultivated, a fine feeling for beauty of form, and is seldom ungraceful in his foliage; but his picture, when examined with reference to essential truth, is one mass of error from beginning to end. Cuyp,[1] on the other hand, could paint close truth of everything except ground and water, with decision and success, but he had no sense of beauty.[2] Gaspar Poussin, more ignorant of truth than Claude, and almost as dead to beauty as Cuyp, has yet a perception of the feeling and moral truth of nature, which

[1] [For Ruskin's general view of Cuyp, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. vi. § 12.]

[2] [Instead of the words "but he had no sense of beauty," eds. 1 and 2 read, "but then he has not the slightest idea of the meaning of the word 'beautiful.'"]

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often redeems the picture; but yet in all of them, everything that they can do is done for deception, and nothing for the sake or love of what they are painting.

§ 4. The principles of selection adopted by modern artists.[1]

Modern landscape painters have looked at nature with totally different eyes, seeking not for what is easier to imitate, but for what is most important to tell. Rejecting at once all idea of *bonâ fide* imitation, they think only of conveying the impression of nature into the mind of the spectator.[2] And there is, in consequence, a greater sum of valuable, essential, and impressive truth in the works of two or three of our leading modern landscape painters, than in those of all the old masters put together, and of truth too, nearly unmixed with definite or avoidable falsehood; while the unimportant and feeble truths of the old masters are choked with a mass of perpetual defiance of the most authoritative laws of nature.

§ 5. General feeling of Claude, Salvator, and G. Poussin, contrasted with the freedom and vastness of nature.

I do not expect this assertion to be believed at present: it must rest for demonstration on the examination we are about to enter upon; yet, even without reference to any intricate or deep-seated truths, it appears strange to me, that any one familiar with nature, and fond of her, should not grow weary and sick at heart among the melancholy and monotonous transcripts of her which alone can be received from the old school of art. A man accustomed to the broad wild sea-shore, with its bright breakers, and free winds, and sounding rocks, and eternal sensation of tameless power, can scarcely but be angered when Claude bids him stand still on some paltry chipped and chiselled quay, with porters and wheelbarrows running against him, to watch a weak, rippling, bound and barriered water, that has not strength enough in one of its waves to upset the flowerpots on the

[1] [In his copy kept for revision Ruskin here says, "Qualify with note."]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 read :—

"spectator, and chiefly of forcing upon his feelings those delicate and refined truths of specific form, which are just what the careless eye can least detect or enjoy, because they are intended by the Deity to be the constant objects of our investigation that they may be the constant sources of our pleasure."]

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wall, or even to fling one jet of spray over the confining stone.[1] A man accustomed to the strength and glory of God's mountains, with their soaring and radiant pinnacles, and surging sweeps of measureless distance, kingdoms in their valleys, and climates upon their crests, can scarcely but be angered when Salvator bids him stand still under some contemptible fragment of splintery crag, which an Alpine snow-wreath would smother in its first swell, with a stunted bush or two growing out of it, and a volume of manufactory smoke[2] for a sky. A man accustomed to the grace and infinity of nature's foliage, with every vista a cathedral, and every bough a revelation, can scarcely but be angered when Poussin mocks him with a black round mass of impenetrable paint, diverging into feathers instead of leaves, and supported on a stick instead of a trunk.[3] The fact is, there is one thing wanting in all the doing of these men, and that is the very virtue by which the work of human mind chiefly rises above that of the daguerreotype or calotype,[4] or any other mechanical means that ever have been or may be invented, Love. There is no evidence of their ever having gone to nature with any thirst, or received from her such emotion as could make them, even for an instant, lose sight of themselves; there is in them neither earnestness nor humility; there is no simple or honest record of any single truth; none of the plain words or straight efforts that men speak and make when they once feel.

[1] [No. 14 in the National Gallery: "Seaport—The Queen of Sheba," for which picture see also above, pt. i. sec. i. ch. v. § 5, p. 106, and below, pt. ii. sec. ii. ch. iii. § 15 (eds. 1 and 2), sec. vi. ch. ii. § 1, pp. 317, 607.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 read, "a Dudley or Halifax-like volume of manufactory smoke."]

[3] [Almost all the rest of this chapter was not included in eds. 1 and 2, which contained instead briefer passages, §§ 6–11. These are here given at the end of the chapter (pp. 253–258). The rest of this chapter, as it stands in the text, is three years later than the rest of vol. i., the 3rd edition (in which it first appeared) having been published in 1846. For Ruskin's account of the following passages substituted in that year, see above, Preface to 3rd ed., p. 53, and *cf.* Introduction, p. xlii.]

[4] [In the daguerreotype, one of the earliest of photographic processes (first published by Daguerre in 1839), the impression was taken upon a silver plate sensitized by iodine, and developed by exposure to the vapour of mercury. In the calotype process (invented by Fox Talbot in 1841) the "plate" was a paper covered with iodide of silver, and was fixed and developed by hyposulphite of soda. For Ruskin's use of the daguerreotype, see below, p. 210; and cf. *Præterita*, ii. ch. vii. § 141.]

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§ 6. *Inadequacy of the landscape of Titian and Tintoret.*

Nor is it only by the professed landscape painters that the great verities of the material world are betrayed. Grand as are the motives* of landscape in the works of the earlier and mightier men, there is yet in them nothing approaching to a general view or complete rendering of natural phenomena; not that they are to be blamed for this; for they took out of nature that which was fit for their purpose, and their mission was to do no more; but we must be cautious to distinguish that imaginative abstraction of landscape which alone we find in them, from the entire statement of truth which has been attempted by the moderns. I have said in the chapter on Symmetry in the second volume,[1] that all landscape grandeur vanishes before that of Titian and Tintoret; and this is true of whatever these two giants touched;—but they touched little. A few level flakes of chestnut foliage; a blue abstraction of hill forms from Cadore or the Euganeans; a grand mass or two of glowing ground and mighty herbage, and a few burning fields of quiet cloud, were all they needed; there is evidence of Tintoret's having felt more than this, but it occurs only in secondary fragments of rock, cloud, or pine, hardly noticed among the accumulated interest of his human subject. From the window of Titian's house at Venice,[2] the

* I suppose this word is now generally received, with respect to both painting and music, as meaning the leading idea of a composition, whether wrought out or not.

[1] [Sec. i. ch. viii.]

[2] [The house still stands (at S. Cancino ai Birri, in the Campo Tiziano), but the seaward view is blocked out. It had in the painter's time, says W. D. Howells, "an incomparably lovely and delightful situation. Standing near the northern boundary of the city, it looked out over the lagoon—across the quiet isle of sepulchres, San Michele, across the smoking chimneys of the Murano glassworks, and the bell-towers of her churches, to the long line of the sea-shore on the right and to the mainland on the left; and beyond the nearer lagoon islands and the faintly pencilled outlines of Torcello and Burano in front to the sublime distance of the Alps, shining in silver and purple, and resting their snowy heads against the clouds. It had a pleasant garden of flowers and trees, into which the painter descended by an open stairway, and in which he is said to have studied the famous tree in 'The Death of Peter Martyr'" (*Venetian Life*, ed. 1891, ii. 26). For other references to Titian's view from his house, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. ii. § 22 *n.*, vol. iii. ch. xviii. § 16, and vol. iv. ch. xv. § 27 (Fig. 26 there given is from a drawing by Titian: "one of the few instances in which he definitely took a suggestion from the Alps, as he saw them from his house at Venice").]

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chain of the Tyrolese Alps is seen lifted in spectral power above the tufted plain of Treviso; every dawn that reddens the towers of Murano lights also a line of pyramidal fires along that colossal ridge; but there is, so far as I know, no evidence in any of the master's works of his ever having beheld, much less felt, the majesty of their burning. The dark firmament and saddened twilight of Tintoret are sufficient for their end: but the sun never plunges behind San Giorgio in Aliga without such retinue of radiant cloud, such rest of zoned light on the green lagoon, as never received image from his hand.[1] More than this, of that which they loved and rendered much is rendered conventionally; by noble conventionalities indeed, but such nevertheless as would be inexcusable if the landscape became the principal subject instead of an accompaniment. I will instance only the San Pietro Martire,[2] which, if not the most perfect, is at least the most popular of Titian's landscapes; in which, to obtain light on the flesh of the near figures, the sky is made as dark as deep sea, the mountains are laid in with violent and impossible blue, except one of them on the left, which, to connect the distant light with the foreground, is thrown into light relief, unexplained by its materials, unlikely in its position, and, in its degree, impossible under any circumstances.

§ 7. Causes its want of influence on subsequent schools.

I do not instance these as faults in the picture: there are no works of very powerful colour which are free from conventionality concentrated or diffused, daring or disguised; but as the conventionality of this whole picture is mainly thrown into the landscape, it is necessary, while we acknowledge the virtue of this distance as a part of the great composition, to be on our guard against the license it assumes and the attractiveness of its overcharged colour. Fragments of far purer truth occur in the works of Tintoret; and in the drawing of foliage, whether rapid or elaborate, of masses or details, the Venetian

[1] [For San Giorgio in Aliga, see Plate 15, *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xviii. § 15.]
[2] [See above, Preface to 2nd. ed., § 22, p. 28 *n.*]

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painters, taken as a body, may be considered almost faultless models. But the whole field of what they have done is so narrow, and therein is so much of what is only relatively right, and in itself false or imperfect, that the young and inexperienced painter could run no greater risk than the too early taking them for teachers; and to the general spectator their landscape is valuable rather as a means of peculiar and solemn emotion, than as ministering to or inspiring the universal love of nature. Hence while men of serious mind, especially those whose pursuits have brought them into continued relations with the peopled rather than the lonely world, will always look to the Venetian painters as having touched those simple chords of landscape harmony which are most in unison with earnest and melancholy feeling; those whose philosophy is more cheerful and more extended, as having been trained and coloured among simple and solitary nature, will seek for a wider and more systematic circle of teaching: they may grant that the barred horizontal gloom of the Titian sky, and the massy leaves of the Titian forest, are among the most sublime of the conceivable forms of material things; but they know that the virtue of these very forms is to be learned only by right comparison of them with the cheerfulness, fulness, and comparative unquietness of other hours and scenes; that they are not intended for the continual food, but the occasional soothing of the human heart; that there is a lesson of not less value in its place, though of less concluding and sealing authority, in every one of the more humble phases of material things; and that there are some lessons of equal or greater authority which these masters neither taught nor received. And until the school of modern landscape arose, Art had never noted the links of this mighty chain; it mattered not that a fragment lay here and there, no heavenly lightning could descend by it; the landscape of the Venetians was without effect on any contemporary or subsequent schools; it still remains on the continent as useless as if it had never existed; and at this moment German and Italian landscapes, of which no words are scornful enough

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to befit the utter degradation,[1] hang in the Venetian Academy in the next room to the Desert of Titian and the Paradise of Tintoret.*

That then which I would have the reader inquire respecting every work of art of undetermined merit submitted to his judgment, is, not whether it be a work of especial grandeur, importance, or power, but whether it have *any* virtue or substance as a link in this chain of truth; whether it have recorded or interpreted anything before unknown; whether it have added one single stone to our heaven-pointing pyramid, cut away one dark bough, or levelled one rugged hillock in our path. This, if it be an honest work of art, it must have done, for no man ever yet worked honestly without giving some such help to his race. God appoints to every one of His creatures a separate mission, and if they discharge it honourably, if they quit themselves like men and faithfully follow that light which is in them, withdrawing from it all cold and quenching influence, there will assuredly come of it such burning as, in its appointed mode and measure, shall shine before men, and be of service constant and holy. Degrees infinite of lustre there must always be, but the weakest among us has a gift,

§ 8. *The value of inferior works of art, how to be estimated.*

* Not the large Paradise, but the Fall of Adam, a small picture chiefly in brown and grey, near Titian's Assumption. Its companion, the Death of Abel, is remarkable as containing a group of trees which Turner, I believe accidentally, has repeated nearly mass for mass in the "Marly." Both are among the most noble works of this or any other master, whether for preciousness of colour or energy of thought.[2]

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[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin struck out the words "German . . . degradation," and substituted "recent landscape works of no merit." The Venetian Academy has been rehung more than once since Ruskin wrote the above passage.]

[2] [See *Guide to the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice*, where Ruskin refers to the two Tintorets as "best possible examples of what, in absolute power of painting, is supremest work, so far as I know, in all the world." For the "Paradise" (or "Adam and Eve"), see below, sec. v. ch. i. § 16, p. 509. For the "Death of Abel," *cf.* below, sec. vi. ch. i. §§ 11, 23 *n.*, pp. 583, 593. For Turner's drawing of "Marly" (engraved in the *Keepsake*), see below, sec. vi. ch. i. § 23. It is not clear what picture Ruskin means by the "Desert" of Titian in the Venetian Academy—presumably the "St. John the Baptist," of which, however, he speaks elsewhere contemptuously; see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xiv. § 14, and *Guide to the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* ("black-and-white scrabble of landscape").]

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however seemingly trivial, which is peculiar to him, and which worthily used will be a gift also to his race for ever—

"Fool not," says George Herbert,

> "For all may have,
> If they dare choose, a glorious life or grave."[1]

If, on the contrary, there be nothing of this freshness achieved, if there be neither purpose nor fidelity in what is done, if it be an envious or powerless imitation of other men's labours, if it be a display of mere manual dexterity or curious manufacture, or if in any other mode it show itself as having its origin in vanity,—Cast it out. It matters not what powers of mind may have been concerned or corrupted in it, all have lost their savour, it is worse than worthless—perilous,—Cast it out.

Works of art are indeed always of mixed kind, their honesty being more or less corrupted by the various weaknesses of the painter, by his vanity, his idleness, or his cowardice. The fear of doing right has far more influence on art than is commonly thought. That only is altogether to be rejected which is altogether vain, idle, and cowardly; of the rest the rank is to be estimated rather by the purity of their metal than the coined value of it.

§ 9. Religious landscape of Italy. The admirableness of its completion.

Keeping these principles in view, let us endeavour to obtain something like a general view of assistance which has been rendered to our study of nature by the various occurrences of landscape in elder art, and by the more exclusively directed labours of modern schools.

To the ideal landscape of the early religious painters of Italy I have alluded in the concluding chapter of the second volume. It is absolutely right and beautiful in its peculiar application; but its grasp of nature is narrow, and its treatment in most respects too severe and conventional to form a profitable example when the landscape is to be alone the subject

[1] ["The Church Porch," stanza xv. For Ruskin's study of George Herbert, see Vol. I. p. 409 n.]

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of thought. The great virtue of it is its entire, exquisite, and humble realization of those objects it selects;[1] in this respect differing from such German imitations of it as I have met with, that there is no effort at any fanciful or ornamental modifications, but loving fidelity to the thing studied. The foreground plants are usually neither exaggerated nor stiffened; they do not form arches or frames or borders; their grace is unconfined, their simplicity undestroyed. Cima da Conegliano, in his picture in the church of the Madonna dell' Orto at Venice,[2] has given us the oak, the fig, the beautiful "Erba della Madonna" on the wall, precisely such a bunch of it as may be seen growing at this day on the marble steps of that very church; ivy and other creepers, and a strawberry plant in the foreground, with a blossom, and a berry just set, and one half ripe and one ripe, all patiently and innocently painted from the real thing, and therefore most divine.[3] Fra Angelico's use of the Oxalis Acetosella is as faithful in representation as touching in feeling.* The ferns that grow on the walls of Fiesole may be seen in their simple verity on the architecture of Ghirlandajo. The rose, the myrtle, and the lily, the olive

* The triple leaf of this plant, and white flower, stained purple, probably gave it strange typical interest among the Christian painters. Angelico, in using its leaves mixed with daisies in the foreground of his Crucifixion, was perhaps thinking of its peculiar power of quenching thirst.[4] "I rather imagine that his thoughts, if he had any thought beyond the mystic form of the leaf, were with its Italian name 'Alleluia,' as if the very flowers around the cross were giving glory to God." (*Note by the Printer.*) I was not aware of this Italian name: in the valleys of Dauphiné it is called "Pain du Bon Dieu," and indeed it whitens the grass and rocks of the hill-crests like manna.

[1] [Ruskin in his copy for revision here notes at the side, "Modify by adding about design."]

[2] [Over the first altar on the right; the subject is "St. John the Baptist, with SS. Peter, Mark, Jerome, and Paul." Ruskin included a photograph of this picture in the "Standard Series" in his Drawing School at Oxford; see *Lectures on Art*, § 150, and for other references to Cima, *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. x. § 5, *Catalogue of the Educational Series*, *Guide to the Academy at Venice*, and *Lectures on Landscape*, § 60.]

[3] [See *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. x. § 5, where Ruskin reaffirms this statement.]

[4] [For "was perhaps thinking . . . like manna," eds. 3 and 4 read, briefly, "had, I imagine, a view also to its chemical property." For another reference to the flower and its French name, see *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. xx. § 5 *n*. "Did some divinity," Ruskin writes in his diary (Feb. 4, 1844), "and wrote a good letter to my father. Passed a pleasant quiet evening with my mother, and found out my favourite Chamounix plant to be the Oxalis Acetosella—a good day."]

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and orange, pomegranate and vine, have received their fairest portraiture where they bear a sacred character; even the common plantains and mallows of the waysides are touched with deep reverence by Raffaelle; and indeed for the perfect treatment or details of this kind, treatment as delicate and affectionate as it is elevated and manly, it is to the works of these schools alone that we can refer. And on this their peculiar excellence I should the more earnestly insist, because it is of a kind altogether neglected by the English school,[1] and with most unfortunate result; many of our best painters missing their deserved rank solely from the want of it, as Gainsborough; and all being more or less checked in their progress or vulgarized in their aim.

§ 10. *Finish, and the want of it, how right—and how wrong.*

It is a misfortune for all honest critics, that hardly any quality of art is independently to be praised, and without reference to the motive from which it resulted, and the place in which it appears; so that no principle can be simply enforced but it shall seem to countenance a vice: while qualification and explanation both weaken the force of what is said, and are not always likely to be with patience received; so also those who desire to misunderstand or to oppose have it always in their power to become obtuse listeners, or specious opponents.[2] Thus I hardly dare insist upon the virtue of completion, lest I should be supposed a defender of Wouvermans or Gerard Dow; neither can I adequately praise the power of Tintoret, without fearing to be thought adverse to Holbein or Perugino. The fact is, that both finish and impetuosity, specific minuteness and large abstraction, may be the signs of passion, or of its reverse;[3] may result from affection or indifference, intellect or dulness. Some men finish from intense love of the beautiful

[1] [For remarks on Turner's failure to paint flowers, see Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, under 33 R.]

[2] [Cf. *Inaugural Address at Cambridge*, § 13, where, referring to the charge that he is apt to contradict himself, Ruskin remarks that, as most matters of any consequence are many-sided, he is "never satisfied that he has handled a subject properly till he has contradicted himself at least three times;" and see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. vii. § 21, where he assembles a few of the necessary "contradictions" in the application of the subtle principles of "finish" in art.]

[3] [In his copy for revision Ruskin italicizes *passion* and *reverse*.]

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in the smallest parts of what they do; others in pure incapability of comprehending anything but parts; others to show their dexterity with the brush, and prove expenditure of time. Some are impetuous and bold in their handling, from having great thoughts to express which are independent of detail; others because they have bad taste or have been badly taught; others from vanity, and others from indolence. (Compare Vol. II. sec. i. ch. x. § 4 *n.*)[1] Now both the finish and incompletion are right where they are the signs of passion or of thought, and both are wrong, and I think the finish the more contemptible of the two, when they cease to be so. The modern Italians[2] will paint every leaf of a laurel or rosebush, without the slightest feeling of their beauty or character; and without showing one spark of intellect or affection from beginning to end. Anything is better than this; and yet the very highest schools *do* the same thing, or nearly so, but with totally different motives and perceptions, and the result is divine. On the whole, I conceive that the extremes of good and evil lie with the finishers, and that whatever glorious power we may admit in men like Tintoret, whatever attractiveness of method in Rubens, Rembrandt, or, though in far less degree, our own Reynolds, still the thoroughly great men are those who have done everything thoroughly, and who, in a word, have never despised anything, however small, of God's making. And this is the chief fault of our English landscapists, that they have not the intense all-observing penetration of well-balanced mind; they have not, except in one or two instances, anything of that feeling which Wordsworth shows in the following lines:—

> "So fair, so sweet, withal so sensitive;—
> Would that the little flowers were born to live
> Conscious of half the pleasure which they give.
> That to this mountain daisy's self were known
> *The beauty of its star-shaped shadow, thrown*
> *On the smooth surface of this naked stone.*"[3]

[1] [This reference was wrongly given in all previous eds.]

[2] [In his copy for revision Ruskin altered these words to "There are modern painters who . . ."]

[3] [From a piece, written in 1845, entitled by the first line as quoted. Contrasting in *Præterita* (i. ch. xii. § 245) his own attitude to nature with that of Wordsworth,

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That is a little bit of good, downright, foreground painting —no mistake about it; daisy, and shadow, and stone texture and all. Our painters must come to this before they have done their duty; and yet, on the other hand, let them beware of finishing, for the sake of finish, all over their picture. The ground is not to be all over daisies, nor is every daisy to have its star-shaped shadow; there is as much finish in the right concealment of things as in the right exhibition of them; and while I demand this amount of specific character where nature shows it, I demand equal fidelity to her where she conceals it. To paint mist rightly, space rightly, and light rightly, it may be often necessary to paint nothing else rightly, but the rule is simple for all that; if the artist is painting something that he knows and loves, as he knows it, because he loves it, whether it be the fair strawberry of Cima, or the clear sky of Francia, or the blazing incomprehensible mist of Turner, he is all right; but the moment he does anything as he thinks it ought to be, because he does not care about it, he is all wrong. He has only to ask himself whether he cares for anything except himself; so far as he does he will make a good picture; so far as he thinks of himself, a vile one. This is the root of the viciousness of the whole French school. Industry they have, learning they have, power they have, feeling they have, yet not so much feeling as ever to force them to forget themselves even for a moment; the ruling motive is invariably vanity, and the picture therefore an abortion.[1]

Returning to the pictures of the religious schools, we find that their open skies are also of the highest value. Their preciousness is such that no subsequent schools can by comparison be said to have painted sky at all, but only clouds, or mist,

Ruskin remarks that he "did not weary himself in writing that a daisy could see the beauty of its shadow, but in trying to draw the shadow rightly himself." Ruskin in his copy for revision marked the rest of § 10, and wrote in the margin, "Note this as one of the important passages leading to Pre-Raphaelitism;" and similarly in *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. x. § 5, he refers to it as "having been written years before Pre-Raphaelitism was thought of."]

[1] [Ruskin in his copy for revision altered the last two sentences, thus: "This is, I think, the chief peril for the modern French school. Industry they have, learning they have, power they have, feeling they have, yet rarely so much feeling as ever to force them to forget themselves" (end).]

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or blue canopies. The golden sky of Marco Basaiti in the Academy of Venice altogether overpowers and renders valueless that of Titian beside it.[1] Those of Francia in the gallery of Bologna are even more wonderful, because cooler in tone and behind figures in full light. The touches of white light in the horizon of Angelico's Last Judgment are felt and wrought with equal truth. The dignified and simple forms of cloud in repose are often by these painters sublimely expressed, but of changeful cloud form they show no examples. The architecture, mountains, and water of these distances are commonly conventional; motives are to be found in them of the highest beauty, and especially remarkable for quantity and meaning of incident; but they can only be studied or accepted in the particular feeling that produced them. It may generally be observed that whatever has been the result of strong emotion is ill seen unless through the medium of such emotion, and will lead to conclusions utterly false and perilous, if it be made a subject of cold-hearted observance, or an object of systematic imitation. One piece of genuine mountain drawing, however, occurs in the landscape of Masaccio's Tribute Money.[2] It is impossible to say what strange results might have taken place in this particular

§ 11. *The open skies of the religious schools, how valuable. Mountain drawing of Masaccio. Landscape of the Bellinis and Giorgione.*

[1] [The pictures are now re-hung, and cannot therefore be identified precisely. The Basaiti is probably "The Agony in the Garden." For another reference to the open skies of Francia, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. v. § 10. For other references to Fra Angelico's "Last Judgment" (No. 38 in the Academy at Florence), see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iii. § 23, vol. iii. ch. iv. § 20.]

[2] [In the Brancacci Chapel of S. Maria del Carmine, Florence. Of Masaccio (1401–1428), Vasari says that "it was he who first attained the clear perception that painting is no other than the close imitation, by drawing and colouring simply, of all the forms presented by nature." Plate 13 in vol. iii. of *Modern Painters* ("First Mountain Naturalism") is from an engraving of the fresco of "The Tribute Money;" for another record, see Josiah Gilbert's *Landscape in Art*, p. 192. Ruskin had been working at Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel in 1845 (see Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. § 10). The following are extracts from his letters to his father in that year:—

> FLORENCE, *May* 31.—I walked into the Medici Chapel for a quarter of an hour, . . . and then spent the afternoon in Or San Michele by the carved shrine of Andrea Orcagna, which I had never seen before. And my present impression is, from what I have seen of Orcagna in the Campo Santo [at Pisa] and here, that Giotto, he, and Michael Angelo are the three great pieces of an artistical Ponte della Trinita, which everybody else has been walking over ever since. But there is one man more to whom I go first thing o' Monday morning, Masaccio, of whose place I have yet no idea. But I think all other

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field of art, or how suddenly a great school of landscape might have arisen, had the life of this great painter been prolonged. Of this particular fresco I shall have much to say hereafter. The two brothers Bellini gave a marked and vigorous impulse to the landscape of Venice; of Gentile's architecture I shall speak presently.[1] Giovanni's, though in style less interesting and in place less prominent, occurring chiefly as a kind of frame to his pictures, connecting them with the architecture of the churches for which they were intended, is in refinement of realization, I suppose, quite unrivalled, especially in passages requiring pure gradation, as the hollows of vaultings. That of Veronese would look ghostly beside it; that of Titian lightless. His landscape is occasionally quaint and strange like Giorgione's and as fine in colour, as that behind the Madonna in the Brera gallery at Milan; but a more truthful fragment occurs in the picture in San Francesco della Vigna at Venice; and in the picture of St. Jerome in the church of San Crisostomo, the landscape is as perfect and beautiful as any background may legitimately be, and, as far as it goes, finer than anything of Titian's. It is remarkable for the absolute truth of its sky, whose blue, clear as crystal, and, though deep in tone, bright as the open air, is gradated to the horizon with a cautiousness and finish almost inconceivable; and to obtain

art is derivative from these men, Raffaelle and all, except the colourists, which is another affair altogether.

June 2.—I went to Masaccio this morning the first thing. I think there ought to be some sympathy between us, for you know he was called Masaccio from his careless habits of dress and absence of mind. And I was not disappointed. It is a strange thing to see struck out at once by a young man, younger than myself (for Masaccio died at twenty-six), that which Michael Angelo came to study reverently and as a pupil, and which Raffaelle not only studied constantly, but of which in his cartoons he copied one of the figures for his St. Paul. I am going to get a sketch of Masaccio's head which is there, painted by himself. It is a kind of mixture of Osborne Gordon and Lorenzo dei Medici (the Magnifico).

For subsequent references to Masaccio, see *Modern Painters*, below, § 19; vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xiv. § 14, sec. ii. ch. v. §§ 11 *n.*, 18; vol. iii. ch. xviii. § 14; vol. iv. ch. xvii. §§ 50–51; *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, § 87.]

[1] [For Gentile Bellini's architecture, see below, § 28, and cf. *Guide to the Venetian Academy*. Giovanni Bellini's Madonna at Milan is No. 297 in the Brera; the sense of the passage has been obscured in all previous eds. by the comma being placed after "Giorgione's" instead of after "colour": there is no Giorgione in the Brera. Bellini's picture in the church of San Francesco della Vigna hangs in the Cappella Santa. The St. Jerome is over the first altar on the right of S. Giovanni Crisostomo (see also *Stones of Venice*, Venetian index, where the picture is called "one of the most precious in Italy, and among the most perfect in the world").]

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light at the horizon without contradicting the system of chiaroscuro adopted in the figures, which are lighted from the right hand, it is barred across with some glowing white cirri, which, in their turn, are opposed by a single dark horizontal line of lower cloud; and to throw the whole further back, there is a wreath of rain cloud of warmer colour floating above the mountains, lighted on its under edge, whose faithfulness to nature, both in hue, and in its irregular and shattered form, is altogether exemplary. The wandering of the light among the hills is equally studied, and the whole is crowned by the grand realization of the leaves of the fig-tree, alluded to in sec. ii. ch. v. § 8 of the second volume, as well as of the herbage upon the rocks. Considering that with all this care and completeness in the background, there is nothing that is not of meaning and necessity in reference to the figures, and that in the figures themselves the dignity and heavenliness of the highest religious painters are combined with a force and purity of colour, greater, I think, than Titian's, it is a work which may be set before the young artist as in every respect a nearly faultless guide. Giorgione's landscape is inventive and solemn, but owing to the rarity even of his nominal works, I dare not speak of it in general terms. It is certainly conventional, and is rather, I imagine, to be studied for its colour and its motives than its details.

§ 12. *Landscape of Titian and Tintoret.*

Of Titian and Tintoret I have spoken already.[1] The latter is every way the greater master, never indulging in the exaggerated colour of Titian, and attaining far more perfect light: his grasp of nature is more extensive, and his view of her more imaginative (incidental notices of his landscape will be found in the chapter on Imagination penetrative, of the second volume), but his impatience usually prevents him from carrying out his thoughts as clearly, or realizing with as much substantiality as Titian. In the St. Jerome of the latter in the gallery of the Brera, there

[1] [Above, § 6. For later references to Tintoret's landscape, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. viii. § 3, and sec. ii. ch. iii. §§ 16, 19. For other references to Titian's "St. Jerome" (No. 248 in the Brera), see *ibid.*, sec. ii. ch. ii. §§ 19, 23; vol. iv. ch. xx. § 16; vol. v. pt. vi. ch. viii. § 13.]

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is a superb example of the modes in which the objects of landscape may be either suggested or elaborated according to their place and claim. The larger features of the ground, foliage, and drapery, as well as the lion in the lower angle, are executed with a slightness which admits not of close examination, and which if not in shade, would be offensive to the generality of observers. But on the rock above the lion, where it turns towards the light, and where the eye is intended to dwell, there is a wreath of ivy, of which every leaf is separately drawn with the greatest accuracy and care, and beside it a lizard, studied with equal earnestness, yet always with that right grandeur of manner to which I have alluded in the preface.[1] Tintoret seldom reaches or attempts the elaboration in substance and colour of these objects, but he is even more truth-telling and certain in his rendering of all the great characters of specific form; and as the painter of Space he stands altogether alone among dead masters; being the first who introduced the slightness and confusion of touch which are expressive of the effects of luminous objects seen through large spaces of air, and the principles of aerial colour which have been since carried out in other fields by Turner. I conceive him to be the most powerful painter whom the world has seen,[2] and that he was prevented from being also the most perfect, partly by untoward circumstances in his position and education, partly by the very fulness and impetuosity of his own mind, partly by the want of religious feeling and its accompanying perception of beauty; for his noble treatment of religious subjects, of which I shall give several examples in the third part, appears to be the result only of that grasp which a great and well-toned intellect necessarily takes of any subject submitted to it, and is wanting in the signs of the more withdrawn and sacred sympathies.*

But whatever advances were made by Tintoret in modes

* Vide *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. chap. i. § 14, and Appendix 11.[3]

[1] [Above, Preface to 2nd ed., § 26, pp. 32–33.]

[2] [For a passage from Ruskin's diary in 1845, describing the revelation of Tintoret, see below, p. 210 n.]

[3] [This note was added in ed. 5.]

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of artistical treatment, he cannot be considered as having enlarged the sphere of landscape conception. He took no cognizance even of the materials and motives, so singularly rich in colour, which were for ever around him in his own Venice. All portions of Venetian scenery introduced by him are treated conventionally and carelessly, the architectural characters lost altogether, the sea distinguished from the sky only by a darker green, while of the sky itself only those forms were employed by him which had been repeated again and again for centuries, though in less tangibility and completion. Of mountain scenery he has left, I believe, no example so far carried as that of John Bellini above instanced.

§ 13. Schools of Florence, Milan, and Bologna.

The Florentine and Umbrian schools supply us with no examples of landscape, except that introduced by their earliest masters, gradually overwhelmed under Renaissance architecture.

Leonardo's landscape has been of unfortunate effect on art, so far as it has had effect at all. In realization of detail he verges on the ornamental; in his rock outlines he has all the deficiencies and little of the feeling of the earlier men.[1] Behind the "Sacrifice for the Friends" of Giotto at Pisa,[2] there is a sweet piece of rock incident; a little fountain breaking out at the mountain foot, and trickling away, its course marked by branches of reeds, the latter formal enough certainly, and always in triplets, but still with a sense of nature pervading the whole which is utterly wanting to the rocks of Leonardo in the Holy Family in the Louvre. The latter are grotesque without being ideal, and extraordinary without being impressive. The sketch in the Uffizii of Florence[3] has some fine foliage, and there is of course a certain virtue in all the work of a man like Leonardo which I would not depreciate, but our

[1] [For further remarks on Leonardo's landscape, see *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, § 86 and Fig. 22.]

[2] [The frescoes of the history of Job on the Campo Santo at Pisa, formerly ascribed to Giotto, are now identified as the work of Francesco da Volterra (1371). Ruskin was working at Pisa in the autumn of 1845 (see *Præterita*, ii. ch. vi., "The Campo Santo," and Introduction to next vol.).]

[3] [No. 1252, an unfinished "Adoration of the Magi," painted on wood in black and white; the trees are the most finished part. For a discussion of this work, see *Leonardo da Vinci*, from the French of Eugène Müntz, 1898, i. 61–79.]

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admiration of it in this particular field must be qualified and our following cautious.

No advances were made in landscape, so far as I know, after the time of Tintoret; the power of art ebbed gradually away from the derivative schools; various degrees of cleverness or feeling being manifested in more or less brilliant conventionalism. I once supposed there was some life in the landscape of Domenichino, but in this I must have been wrong. The man who painted the Madonna del Rosario and Martyrdom of St. Agnes in the gallery of Bologna, is palpably incapable of doing anything good, great, or right, in any field, way, or kind whatsoever.*

§ 14. *Claude, Salvator, and the Poussins.*

Though, however, at this period the general grasp of the schools was perpetually contracting, a gift was given to the world by Claude, for which we are perhaps hardly enough grateful, owing to the very frequency of our after enjoyment of it. He set the sun int

* This is no rash method of judgment, sweeping and hasty as it may appear. From the weaknesses of an artist, or failures, however numerous, we have no right to conjecture his total inability; a time may come when he may rise into sudden strength, or an instance occur when his efforts shall be successful. But there are some pictures which rank not under the head of failures, but of perpetrations or commissions; some things which a man cannot do or say without sealing for ever his character and capacity. The angel holding the cross with his finger in his eye, the roaring red-faced children about the crown of thorns, the blasphemous (I speak deliberately and determinedly) head of Christ upon the handkerchief, and the mode in which the martyrdom of the saint is exhibited (I do not choose to use the expressions which alone could characterize it), are perfect, sufficient, incontrovertible proofs that whatever appears good in any of the doings of such a painter must be deceptive, and that we may be assured that our taste is corrupted and false whenever we feel disposed to admire him. I am prepared to support this position, however uncharitable it may seem; a man may be tempted into a gross sin by passion and forgiven, and yet there are some kinds of sins into which only men of a certain kind can be tempted, and which cannot be forgiven. It should be added, however, that the artistical qualities of these pictures are in every way worthy of the conceptions they realize; I do not recollect any instance of colour or execution so coarse and feelingless.[1]

[1] ["I retain unqualified this of Domenichino," wrote Ruskin in the margin of the copy of *Modern Painters* which he kept for revision in later years. For other expressions of similar opinion, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. v. § 17, vol. iii. ch. xviii. § 20; *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. v. § 5. J. A. Symonds has remarked on the "clangour of emphasis" in Ruskin's depreciation of Domenichino (*Renaissance in Italy*, ed. 1898, vii. 220); it was the emphasis of an attack upon a then established reputation.]

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heaven, and was, I suppose, the first who attempted anything like the realization of actual sunshine in misty air. He gives the first example of the study of nature for her own sake, and allowing for the unfortunate circumstances of his education, and for his evident inferiority of intellect, more could hardly have been expected from him. His false taste, forced composition, and ignorant rendering of detail have perhaps been of more detriment to art than the gift he gave was of advantage. The character of his own mind is singular; I know of no other instance of a man's working from nature continually with the desire of being true, and never attaining the power of drawing so much as a bough of a tree rightly.[1] Salvator, a man originally endowed with far higher power of mind than Claude, was altogether unfaithful to his mission, and has left us, I believe, no gift. Everything that he did is evidently for the sake of exhibiting his own dexterity; there is no love of any kind for any thing; his choice of landscape features is dictated by no delight in the sublime, but by mere animal restlessness or ferocity, guided by an imaginative power of which he could not altogether deprive himself. He has done nothing which others have not done better, or which it would not have been better not to have done; in nature he mistakes distortion for energy, and savageness for sublimity; in man, mendicity for sanctity, and conspiracy for heroism.[2]

The landscape of Nicolo Poussin shows much power, and is usually composed and elaborated on right principles (compare preface to second edition[3]), but I am aware of nothing that it has attained of new or peculiar excellence; it is a graceful mixture of qualities to be found in other masters in higher degrees. In finish it is inferior to Leonardo's, in invention to Giorgione's, in truth to Titian's, in grace to Raffaelle's. The landscapes of Gaspar have serious feeling and often valuable and solemn colour; virtueless otherwise, they are full of the

[1] [For some general remarks on Ruskin's estimate of Claude, see above, Introduction, p. xxxiv.]

[2] [For Ruskin's general estimate of Salvator Rosa, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. iv.]

[3] [Page 30, above. For Gaspar Poussin, see index volume.]

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most degraded mannerism, and I believe the admiration of them to have been productive of extensive evil among recent schools.

§ 15. *German and Flemish landscape.*

The development of landscape north of the Alps presents us with the same general phases, under modifications dependent partly on less intensity of feeling, partly on diminished availableness of landscape material. That of the religious painters is treated with the same affectionate completion; but exuberance of fancy sometimes diminishes the influence of the imagination, and the absence of the Italian force of passion admits of more patient and somewhat less intellectual elaboration. A morbid habit of mind is evident in many, seeming to lose sight of the balance and relations of things, so as to become intense in trifles, gloomily minute, as in Albert Dürer;[1] and this mingled with a feverish operation of the fancy, which appears to result from certain habitual conditions of bodily health rather than of mental culture, and of which the sickness, without the power, is eminently characteristic of the modern Germans;[2] but with all this there are virtues of the very highest order in those schools, and I regret that my knowledge is insufficient to admit of my giving any detailed account of them.

In the landscape of Rembrandt and Rubens, we have the northern parallel to the power of the Venetians. Among the etchings and drawings of Rembrandt, landscape thoughts may be found not unworthy of Titian, and studies from nature of sublime fidelity; but his system of chiaroscuro was inconsistent with the gladness, and his peculiar modes of feeling with the grace, of nature; nor, from my present knowledge, can I name any work on canvas in which he has carried out the dignity of his etched conceptions, or exhibited any perceptiveness of new truths.[3]

Not so Rubens, who perhaps furnishes us with the first

[1] [For Ruskin's numerous references to Dürer, see index volume to this edition; see, especially, *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. iv., "Dürer and Salvator."]

[2] [In the copy for revision the words "and of which . . . Germans" are struck out.]

[3] [For Ruskin's estimate of Rembrandt, see *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. iii. § 16; vol. iv. ch. ii. §§ 11–19; vol. v. pt. ix. ch. v. § 10; and *The Cestus of Aglaia*, §§ 49–56.]

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instances of complete, unconventional, unaffected landscape. His treatment is healthy, manly, and rational, not very affectionate, yet often condescending to minute and multitudinous detail; always, as far as it goes, pure, forcible, and refreshing, consummate in composition, and marvellous in colour. In the Pitti palace, the best of its two Rubens' landscapes has been placed near a characteristic and highly finished Titian, the Marriage of St. Catherine.[1] Were it not for the grandeur of line and solemn feeling in the flock of sheep and the figures of the latter work, I doubt if all its glow and depth of tone could support its overcharged green and blue against the open breezy sunshine of the Fleming. I do not mean to rank the art of Rubens with that of Titian; but it is always to be remembered that Titian hardly ever paints sunshine, but a certain opalescent twilight which has as much of human emotion as of imitative truth in it,* and that art of this kind must always be liable to some appearance of failure when compared with a less pathetic statement of facts.

* "The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality."[2]

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[1] [In the Sala di Venere. The Rubens is No. 14, "Return from Field Labour;" the Titian, No. 17. There are notes of these two pictures in one of the MS. books filled with Ruskin's account of pictures seen at Florence in 1845. After discussing "La Bella" of Titian in the same gallery, he continues:—

"Beside this there is a Landscape with Holy Family called the 'Marriage of St. Catherine,' which is a far finer picture; it is simple, solemn, and glowing. Whether the white of St. Catherine's dress has been intended for white may be doubted owing to its vivid golden glow, but it is the nearest thing to white in the whole picture. The distance, though deep and beautiful, is overcharged with ultramarine, and looks artificial beside the beautiful atmospheric grey greens of Rubens' distance in the same room, but the picture is nevertheless of the highest quality."

Of the Rubens he writes:—

"The landscape on the whole, which I studied, is the finest that I saw in Florence, though its subject is simple pastoral. It is especially remarkable for the miniature care and Turner-like labour bestowed on the distance, while all the foreground is so slurred and so slightly painted, that the ground seen near looks like a sketch of hay more than anything else. It is, I consider, in every respect a faultless picture, and most instructive in all points of art."

For other references to the landscape of Rubens, see below, sec. ii. ch. iv. § 16 (eds. 1 and 2 only), and *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xiii. § 20, ch. xviii. §§ 12, 20; vol. v. pt. ix. ch. vi. § 10.]

[2] [This quotation, from Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality," was placed in eds. 3 and 4 in the body of the text, after the words "imitative truth in it."]

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It is to be noted, however, that the licenses taken by Rubens in particular instances are as bold as his general statements are sincere. In the landscape just instanced the horizon is an oblique line; in the Sunset of our own gallery many of the shadows fall at right angles to the light; in a picture in the Dulwich Gallery a rainbow is seen by the spectator at the side of the sun; and in one in the Louvre,[1] the sunbeams come from one part of the sky, and the sun appears in another.[2]

These bold and frank licenses are not to be considered as detracting from the rank of the painter; they are usually characteristic of those minds whose grasp of nature is so certain and extensive as to enable them fearlessly to sacrifice a truth of actuality to a truth of feeling. Yet the young artist must keep in mind that the painter's greatness consists not in his taking, but in his atoning for them.

§ 16. *The lower Dutch schools.*

Among the professed landscapists of the Dutch school, we find much dexterous imitation of certain kinds of nature, remarkable usually for its persevering rejection of whatever is great, valuable, or affecting in the object studied. Where, however, they show real desire to paint what they saw as far as they saw it, there is of course much in them that is instructive, as in Cuyp and in the etchings of Waterloo,[3] which have even very sweet and genuine feeling; and so in some of their architectural painters. But the object of the great body of them is merely to display manual dexterities of one kind or another; and their effect on the public mind is so totally for evil, that though I do not deny the advantage an artist of real judgment may derive

[1] [The words "and in one in the Louvre . . . appears in another" were added in ed. 4.]

[2] [The picture in the National Gallery is No. 157; for another reference to it, see below, sec. iii. ch. ii. § 9. The picture in the Dulwich Gallery is No. 175, now No. 132, and catalogued as a copy after Rubens; for another reference to the picture, see below, sec. ii. ch. ii. § 12, p. 290. The picture in the Louvre is No. 463, "A Tournament"; cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xviii. § 23 and Fig. 6.]

[3] [Anthonie Waterlo, or Waterloo, painter and engraver, 1609–1676. His etchings had been brought to Ruskin's notice by J. D. Harding, as the following extract from Ruskin's diary shows:—

> *Feb.* 9, 1843.—Harding showed me some etchings of a man named Waterloo which were once thought very valuable; rubbish enough, and yet a feeling of truth in them which is refreshing.]

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from the study of some of them, I conceive the best patronage that any monarch could possibly bestow upon the arts, would be to collect the whole body of them into one gallery and burn it to the ground.[1]

§ 17. *English school, Wilson and Gainsborough.*

Passing to the English school, we find a connecting link between them and the Italians formed by Richard Wilson. Had this artist studied under favourable circumstances, there is evidence of his having possessed power enough to produce an original picture; but corrupted by study of the Poussins, and gathering his materials chiefly in their field, the district about Rome—a district especially unfavourable, as exhibiting no pure or healthy nature, but a diseased and overgrown flora, among half-developed volcanic rocks, loose calcareous concretions, and mouldering wrecks of buildings, and whose spirit I conceive to be especially opposed to the natural tone of the English mind,[2]—his originality was altogether overpowered; and, though he paints in a manly way and occasionally reaches exquisite tones of colour, as in the small and very precious picture belonging to Mr. Rogers, and sometimes manifests some freshness of feeling, as in the Villa of Mæcenas of our National Gallery,[3] yet his pictures are in general mere diluted adaptations from Poussin and Salvator, without the dignity of the one, or the fire of the other.

Not so Gainsborough; a great name his, whether of the English or any other school. The greatest colourist since Rubens, and the last, I think, of legitimate colourists; that is to say, of those who were fully acquainted with the power of their material; pure in his English feeling, profound in his seriousness, graceful in his gaiety. There are nevertheless

[1] [Ruskin marked § 16 in his copy for revision, and wrote in the margin, "Retain with notice." Ed. 3 reads "a grand gallery"; this was corrected by his father (in his copy) to "one gallery," and the correction was adopted in ed. 4.]

[2] [*Cf.* the impression of Rome and the Campagna given in a letter to the Rev. T. Dale (Dec. 31, 1840), in Vol. I. p. 382.]

[3] [No. 108. The Wilson, formerly in the Rogers collection, was No. 73 in Mrs. Jameson's catalogue (*Companion to the Private Galleries of Art in London*, 1844), where it is described as "Landscape.—An evening effect of deep shadow, and rich glowing light. 16 in. by 20 in." For a later and more sympathetic reference to Wilson, see *The Art of England*, § 166.]

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certain deductions to be made from his worthiness which yet I dread to make, because my knowledge of his landscape works is not extensive enough to justify me in speaking of them decisively; but this is to be noted of all that I know, that they are rather motives of feeling and colour than earnest studies; that their execution is in some degree mannered, and always hasty; that they are altogether wanting in the affectionate detail of which I have already spoken; and that their colour is in some measure dependent on a bituminous brown and conventional green, which have more of science than of truth in them. These faults may be sufficiently noted in the magnificent picture presented by him to the Royal Academy,[1] and tested by a comparison of it with the Turner (Llanberis) in the same room. Nothing can be more attractively luminous or aërial than the distance of the Gainsborough, nothing more bold or inventive than the forms of its crags and the diffusion of the broad distant light upon them, where a vulgar artist would have thrown them into dark contrast. But it will be found that the light of the distance is brought out by a violent exaggeration of the gloom in the valley; that the forms of the green trees which bear the chief light are careless and ineffective; that the markings of the crags are equally hasty; and that no object in the foreground has realization enough to enable the eye to rest upon it. The Turner, a much feebler picture in its first impression, and altogether inferior in the quality and value of its individual hues, will yet be found in the end more forcible, because unexaggerated; its gloom is moderate and aërial, its light deep in tone, its colour entirely unconventional, and the forms of its rocks studied with the most devoted care. With Gainsborough terminates the series of painters connected with the elder schools.[2] By whom, among those yet living or lately lost, the impulse was first given to modern landscape, I attempt not to decide. Such questions are rather invidious than interesting; the particular

[1] [Gainsborough's Diploma-picture is a landscape with sheep at a fountain; Turner's, "Dolbadern Castle, North Wales" (exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1800).]

[2] [In his copy for revision Ruskin has here written on the margin, "Note on Gainsborough and Constable."]

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tone or direction of any school seems to me always to have resulted rather from certain phases of national character, limited to particular periods, than from individual teaching, and, especially among moderns, what has been good in each master has been commonly original.

I have already alluded[1] to the simplicity and earnestness of the mind of Constable; to its vigorous rupture with school laws, and to its unfortunate error on the opposite side. Unteachableness seems to have been a main feature of his character, and there is corresponding want of veneration in the way he approaches nature herself. His early education and associations were also against him; they induced in him a morbid preference of subjects of a low order. I have never seen any work of his in which there were any signs of his being able to draw,[2] and hence even the most necessary details are painted by him inefficiently. His works are also eminently wanting both in rest and refinement: and Fuseli's jesting compliment[3] is too true; for the showery weather, in which the artist delights, misses alike the majesty of storm and the loveliness of calm weather; it is great-coat weather, and nothing more. There is strange want of depth in the mind which has no pleasure in sunbeams but when piercing painfully through clouds, nor in foliage but when shaken by the wind, nor in light itself but when flickering, glistening, restless and feeble. Yet, with all these deductions, his works are to be deeply respected, as thoroughly original, thoroughly honest, free from affectation, manly in manner, frequently successful in cool colour, and realizing certain motives of English scenery with perhaps as much affection as such scenery, unless when regarded through media of feeling derived from higher sources, is calculated to inspire.

§ 18. *Constable, Callcott.*

On the works of Callcott, high as his reputation stands, I should look with far less respect;[4] I see not any preference or

[1] [Above, Preface to 2nd ed., § 39 *n.*, p. 45.]

[2] [In Ruskin's copy for revision this word is italicized. For a defence of Constable against this criticism, see C. R. Leslie's *Handbook for Young Painters*, 1855, p. 275.]

[3] ["I am going to see Constable; bring me mine ombrella."]

[4] [For an earlier reference to Callcott, see *Poetry of Architecture*, § 5, in Vol. I. p. 7, and for another, see below, sec. ii. ch. i. §§ 12, 22 *n.*]

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affection in the artist; there is no tendency in him with which we can sympathize, nor does there appear any sign of aspiration, effort, or enjoyment in any one of his works. He appears to have completed them methodically, to have been content with them when completed, to have thought them good, legitimate, regular pictures; perhaps in some respects better than nature. He painted everything tolerably, and nothing excellently; he has given us no gift, struck for us no light, and though he has produced one or two valuable works, of which the finest I know is the Marine in the possession of Sir J. Swinburne, they will, I believe, in future have no place among those considered representatives of the English school.

§ 19. *Peculiar tendency of recent landscape.*

Throughout the range of elder art, it will be remembered we have found no instance of the faithful painting of mountain scenery, except in a faded background of Masaccio's; nothing more than rocky eminences, undulating hills, or fantastic crags, and even these treated altogether under typical forms. The more specific study of mountains seems to have coincided with the more dexterous practice of water-colour; but it admits of doubt whether the choice of subject has been directed by the vehicle, or whether, as I rather think, the tendency of national feeling has not been followed in the use of the most appropriate means. Something is to be attributed to the increased demand for slighter works of art, and much to the sense of the quality of objects now called picturesque, which appears to be exclusively of modern origin. From what feeling the character of middle-age architecture and costume arose, or with what kind of affection their forms were regarded by the inventors, I am utterly unable to guess; but of this I think we may be assured, that the natural instinct and childlike wisdom of those days were altogether different from the modern feeling which appears to have taken its origin in the absence of such objects, and to be based rather on the strangeness of their occurrence than on any real affection for them; and which is certainly so shallow and ineffective as to be

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instantly and always sacrificed by the majority to fashion, comfort, or economy. Yet I trust that there is a healthy though feeble love of nature mingled with it; nature pure, separate, felicitous, which is also peculiar to the moderns; and as signs of this feeling, or ministers to it, I look with veneration upon many works which, in a technical point of view, are of minor importance.

§ 20. *G. Robson, D. Cox. False use of the term "style."*

I have been myself indebted for much teaching and more delight to those of the late G. Robson.[1] Weaknesses there are in them manifold, much bad drawing, much forced colour, much over-finish, little of what artists call composition; but there is thorough affection for the thing drawn; they are serious and quiet in the highest degree, certain qualities of atmosphere and texture in them have never been excelled, and certain facts of mountain scenery never but by them expressed; as, for instance, the stillness and depth of the mountain tarns, with the reversed imagery of their darkness signed across by the soft lines of faintly touching winds; the solemn flush of the brown fern and glowing heath under evening light; the purple mass of mountains far removed, seen against clear still twilight. With equal gratitude I look to the drawings of David Cox,[2] which, in spite of their loose and seemingly careless execution, are not less serious in their meaning, nor less important in their truth. I must, however, in reviewing those modern works in which certain modes of execution are particularly manifested, insist especially on this general principle, applicable to all times of art; that what is usually called the style or manner of an artist is, in all good art, nothing but the best means of getting at the particular truth which the artist wanted; it is not a mode peculiar to himself of getting at the same truths as other men, but the *only* mode of getting

[1] [George Fennel Robson, member of the Old Water-Colour Society, born 1790, had died in 1833. In the *Art of England*, Ruskin coupled the names of Robson and Fielding with Lecture vi. on "The Hill Side"; see §§ 176–177 for his appreciation of Robson's drawings, and cf. *Academy Notes*, 1875, and *Notes on Prout and Hunt*, pref. § 28. See also in this volume, pt. ii. sec. v. ch. ii. § 12, p. 535, and *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xvi. § 26, vol. iv. ch. iv § 2.]

[2] [For Cox, see above, pref. to 2nd ed. § 40 n., p. 46.]

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the particular facts he desires, and which mode, if others had desired to express those facts, they also must have adopted. All habits of execution persisted in under no such necessity, but because the artist has invented them, or desires to show his dexterity in them, are utterly base; for every good painter finds so much difficulty in reaching the end he sees and desires, that he has no time nor power left for playing tricks on the road to it; he catches at the easiest and best means he can get; it is possible that such means may be singular, and then it will be said that his *style* is strange; but it is not a style at all, it is the saying of a particular thing in the only way in which it possibly can be said.[1] Thus the reed pen outline and peculiar touch of Prout, which are frequently considered as mere manner, are in fact the only means of expressing the crumbling character of stone which the artist loves and desires. That character never has been expressed except by him, nor will it ever be expressed except by his means. And it is of the greatest importance to distinguish this kind of necessary and virtuous manner from the conventional manners very frequent in derivative schools, and always utterly to be contemned, wherein an artist, desiring nothing and feeling nothing, executes everything in his own particular mode, and teaches emulous scholars how to do with difficulty what might have been done with ease. It is true that there are sometimes instances in which great masters have employed different means of getting at the same end, but in these cases their choice has been always of those which to them appeared the shortest and most complete: their practice has never been prescribed by affectation or continued from habit, except so far as must be expected from such weakness as is common to all men; from hands that necessarily do most readily what they are most accustomed to do, and minds always liable to prescribe to the hands that which they can do most readily.[2]

[1] [With these remarks on *style* in art, cf. *Letters to a College Friend*, iv. § 2 (in Vol. I. p. 421), and *Catalogue of the Sketches and Drawings by Turner*, 1857–58, Introduction, § 12.]

[2] [In his copy for revision Ruskin has marked as "very good" the paragraphs, "It is true . . . readily." On the other hand, he notes the apology for Cox's loose and blotted handling as "wrong," and on the further criticisms makes the general

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The recollection of this will keep us from being offended with the loose and blotted handling of David Cox. There is no other means by which his object could be attained; the looseness, coolness, and moisture of his herbage, the rustling crumpled freshness of his broad-leaved weeds, the play of pleasant light across his deep heathered moor or plashing sand, the melting of fragments of white mist into the dropping blue above; all this has not been fully recorded except by him, and what there is of accidental in his mode of reaching it, answers gracefully to the accidental part of nature herself. Yet he is capable of more than this, and if he suffers himself uniformly to paint beneath his capability, that which began in feeling must necessarily end in manner. He paints too many small pictures, and perhaps has of late permitted his peculiar execution to be more manifest than is necessary. Of this, he is himself the best judge. For almost all faults of this kind the public are answerable, not the painter. I have alluded to one of his grander works—such as I should wish always to see him paint—in the preface (p. 46 § 40 *n.*); another, I think still finer, a red Sunset on distant hills, almost unequalled for truth and power of colour, was painted by him several years ago, and remains, I believe, in his own possession.

§ 21. Copley Fielding. Phenomena of distant colour.

The deserved popularity of Copley Fielding has rendered it less necessary for me to allude frequently to his works in the following pages than it would otherwise have been; more especially as my own sympathies and enjoyments are so entirely directed in the channel which his art has taken, that I am afraid of trusting them too far.[1] Yet I may, perhaps, be permitted to

remark, "All drawn mild after this because the men were living." These annotations are dated by Ruskin "1864"; with them *cf.* above, Introduction, p. xlii. At a later time, looking back to these additional notices of then contemporary artists, he found, however, "the display of my new Italian information, and assertion of critical acumen, prevail sorrowfully over the expressions of gratitude with which I ought to have described the help and delight they had given me" (*Præterita*, ii. ch. ix. § 174, and cf. *Lectures on Art*, § 8). But Ruskin's estimates of the art of 1840 to 1850 varied according to his standard of comparison. In *Academy Notes* for 1875 he looked back upon those years as halcyon days (see *s.* No. 265); but in a note added in 1883 to the "Addenda" in *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., he found a since "incalculable advance."]

[1] [For the numerous references to Fielding in *Modern Painters* and elsewhere, consult index volume to this edition, and see especially *Art of England*, Lecture vi.

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speak of myself so far as I suppose my own feelings to be representative of those of a class; and I suppose that there are many who, like myself, at some period of their life have derived more intense and healthy pleasure from the works of this painter than of any other whatsoever; healthy, because always based on his faithful and simple rendering of nature, and that of very lovely and impressive nature, altogether freed from coarseness, violence, or vulgarity. Various references to that which he has attained will be found subsequently: what I am now about to say respecting what he has *not* attained, is not in depreciation of what he has accomplished, but in regret at his suffering powers of a high order to remain in any measure dormant.

He indulges himself too much in the use of crude colour. Pure cobalt, violent rose, and purple, are of frequent occurrence in his distances; pure siennas and other browns in his foregrounds, and that not as expressive of lighted but of local colour. The reader will find in the following chapters that I am no advocate for subdued colouring; but crude colour is not bright colour, and there was never a noble or brilliant work of colour yet produced, whose real power did not depend on the subduing of its tints rather than the elevation of them.

It is perhaps one of the most difficult lessons to learn in art, that the warm colours of distance, even the most glowing, are subdued by the air so as in nowise to resemble the same colour seen on a foreground object; so that the rose of sunset on clouds or mountains has a grey in it which distinguishes it from the rose colour of the leaf of a flower; and the mingling of this grey of distance without in the slightest degree taking away the expression of the intense and perfect purity of the colour in and by itself, is perhaps the last attainment of the great landscape colourist. In the same way the blue of distance, however intense, is not the blue of a bright blue flower; and it is not distinguished from it by different texture merely, but by a certain intermixture and undercurrent of warm colour, which are altogether wanting in many of the blues of

Fielding had been Ruskin's drawing-master (see *Præterita*, i. §§ 239, 241, 243), and was on terms of personal friendship with him and his father (*ibid.* § 238).]

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Fielding's distances; and so of every bright distant colour; while in foreground, where colours may be, and ought to be, pure, they yet become expressive of light only where there is the accurate fitting of them to their relative shadows which we find in the works of Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret, Veronese, Turner, and all other great colourists. Of this fitting of light to shadow Fielding is altogether regardless, so that his foregrounds are constantly assuming the aspect of overcharged local colour instead of sunshine, and his figures and cattle look transparent.

§ 22. *Beauty of mountain foreground.*

Again, the finishing of Fielding's foregrounds, as regards their drawing, is minute without accuracy, multitudinous without thought, and confused without mystery. Where execution is seen to be in measure accidental, as in Cox, it may be received as representative of what is accidental in nature; but there is no part of Fielding's foreground that is accidental; it is evidently worked and re-worked, dotted, rubbed, and finished with great labour. And where the virtue, playfulness, and freedom of accident are thus removed, one of two virtues must be substituted for them: either we must have the deeply studied and imaginative foreground, of which every part is necessary to every other, and whose every spark of light is essential to the wellbeing of the whole, of which the foregrounds of Turner in the Liber Studiorum are the most eminent examples I know; or else we must have in some measure the botanical faithfulness and realization of the early masters. Neither of these virtues is to be found in Fielding's. Its features, though grouped with feeling, are yet scattered and unessential. Any one of them might be altered in many ways without doing harm; there is no proportioned, necessary, unalterable relation among them; no evidence of invention or of careful thought; while on the other hand there is no botanical or geological accuracy, nor any point on which the eye may rest with thorough contentment in its realization.

It seems strange that to an artist of so quick feeling the details of a mountain foreground should not prove irresistibly

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attractive, and entice him to greater accuracy of study. There is not a fragment of its living rock, nor a tuft of its heathery herbage, that has not adorable manifestations of God's working thereupon. The harmonies of colour among the native lichens are better than Titian's; the interwoven bells of campanula and heather are better than all the arabesques of the Vatican;[1] they need no improvement, arrangement, nor alteration, nothing but love: and every combination of them is different from every other, so that a painter need never repeat himself if he will only be true. Yet all these sources of power have been of late entirely neglected by Fielding. There is evidence through all his foregrounds of their being mere home inventions, and, like all home inventions, they exhibit perpetual resemblances and repetitions; the painter is evidently embarrassed without his rutted road in the middle, and his boggy pool at the side, which pool he has of late painted in hard lines of violent blue; there is not a stone, even of the nearest and most important, which has its real lichens upon it, or a studied form, or anything more to occupy the mind than certain variations of dark and light browns. The same faults must be found with his present painting of foliage, neither the stems nor leafage being ever studied from nature; and this is the more to be regretted, because in the earlier works of the artist there was much admirable drawing, and even yet his power is occasionally developed in his larger works, as in a Bolton Abbey on canvas, which was—I cannot say, exhibited,—but was in the rooms of the Royal Academy in 1843.* I should have made the

* It appears not to be sufficiently understood by those artists who complain acrimoniously of their position on the Academy walls, that the Academicians have in their own rooms a right to the line and the best places near it; in their taking this position there is no abuse nor injustice; but the Academicians should remember that with their rights they have their duties, and their duty is to determine, among the works of artists not belonging to their body, those which are most likely to advance public knowledge and judgment, and to give these the best places next their own; neither would it detract from their dignity if they occasionally ceded a square

[1] [*Cf.* above, pt. i. sec. i. ch. ii. § 9, p. 92.]

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preceding remarks with more hesitation and diffidence, but that, from a comparison of works of this kind with the slighter ornaments of the water-colour rooms, it seems evident that the painter is not unaware of the deficiencies of these latter, and concedes something of what he would himself desire to what he has found to be the feeling of a majority of his admirers. This is a dangerous modesty, and especially so in these days when the judgment of the many is palpably as artificial as their feeling is cold.

There is much that is instructive and deserving of high praise in the sketches of De Wint.[1] Yet it is to be remembered that even the pursuit of truth, however determined, will have results limited and imperfect when its chief motive is the pride of being true; and I fear that these works testify more accuracy of eye and experience of colour than exercise of thought. Their truth of effect is often purchased at too great an expense by the loss of all beauty of form, and of the higher refinements of colour; § 23. *De Wint.*

even of their own territory, as they did gracefully and rightly, and I am sorry to add, disinterestedly, to the picture of Paul de la Roche in 1844. Now the Academicians know perfectly well that the mass of portrait which encumbers their walls at half height is worse than useless, seriously harmful to the public taste; and it was highly criminal (I use the word advisedly) that the valuable and interesting work of Fielding, of which I have above spoken, should have been placed where it was, above three rows of eye-glasses and waistcoats. A very beautiful work of Harding's was treated, either in the same or the following Exhibition, with still greater injustice. Fielding's was merely put out of sight; Harding's where its faults were conspicuous and its virtues lost. It was an Alpine scene, of which the foreground, rocks, and torrents were painted with unrivalled fidelity and precision; the foliage was dexterous, the aërial gradations of the mountains tender and multitudinous, their forms carefully studied and very grand. The blemish of the picture was a buff-coloured tower with a red roof: singularly meagre in detail, and conventionally relieved from a mass of gloom. The picture was placed where nothing but this tower could be seen.[2]

[1] [For De Wint, see *Letters to a College Friend*, v. § 4, in Vol. I. p. 426; for minor references, see index volume to this edition.]

[2] [The picture of Paul de la Roche was "The Holy Family," No. 303 in the catalogue. For another reference to that painter, see *The Cestus of Aglaia*, § 2. The Harding—"The Mountain Pass"—was in the exhibition of 1845, No. 529. For later criticisms by Ruskin on the hanging at the Royal Academy, see *Academy Notes*, 1856, 1857, 1859, and 1875. Fielding's "Bolton Abbey" was No. 12 in the Academy of 1842 (not 1843); *cf.* p. 482.]

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deficiencies, however, on which I shall not insist, since the value of the sketches, as far as they go, is great: they have done good service and set good example, and whatever their failings may be, there is evidence in them that the painter has always done what he believed to be right.

§ 24. *Influence of engraving. J. D. Harding.*

The influence of the masters of whom we have hitherto spoken is confined to those who have access to their actual works, since the particular qualities in which they excel are in no wise to be rendered by the engraver. Those of whom we have next to speak are known to the public in a great measure by help of the engraver; and while their influence is thus very far extended, their modes of working are perhaps, in some degree, modified by the habitual reference to the future translation into light and shade; reference which is indeed beneficial in the care it induces respecting the arrangement of the chiaroscuro and the explanation of the forms, but which is harmful, so far as it involves a dependence rather on quantity of picturesque material than on substantial colour or simple treatment, and as it admits of indolent diminution of size and slightness of execution.

We should not be just to the present works of J. D. Harding,[1] unless we took this influence into account. Some

[1] [From Harding also, Ruskin had drawing lessons: see note to *Letters to a College Friend*, v. § 3, Vol. I. p. 425. For Ruskin's many references to this painter, see index volume to this edition. Harding had been his travelling companion in Italy during part of the tour in 1845 (the year before the publication of these passages). The following extract from one of Ruskin's letters home at that time illustrates some of the criticisms in § 24:—

> Baveno, *Aug.* 26.—I am very glad to have Harding with me, and we are going to Venice together; but I am in a curious position with him—being actually writing criticisms on his works for publication, while I dare not say the same things openly to his face; not because I would not, but because he does not like blame, and it does him no good. And yet on my side, it discourages me a little; for Harding does such pretty things, such desirable things to have, such desirable things to show, that when I looked at my portfolio afterwards, and saw the poor result of the immense time I have spent—the brown, laboured, melancholy, uncovetable things that I have struggled through, it vexed me mightily; and yet I am sure I am on a road that leads higher than his, but it is infernally steep, and one tumbles on it perpetually. I beat him dead, however, at a sketch of a sky this afternoon. There is one essential difference between us: his sketches are always pretty because he balances their parts together, and considers them as pictures; mine are always ugly, for I consider my sketch only as a written note of certain *facts*, and those I put down in the rudest and clearest way as many as possible.

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years back none of our artists realised more laboriously, or obtained more substantial colour and texture; but[1] partly from the habit of making slight and small drawings for engravers, and partly also, I imagine, from an overstrained seeking after appearances of dexterity in execution, his drawings have of late years become both less solid and less complete; not, however, without attaining certain brilliant qualities in exchange which are very valuable in the treatment of some of the looser portions of subject. Of the extended knowledge and various powers of this painter, frequent instances will be noted in the following pages. Neither, perhaps, are rightly estimated among artists, owing to a certain coldness of sentiment in his choice of subject, and a continual preference of the picturesque to the impressive; proved perhaps in nothing so distinctly as in the little interest usually attached to his skies, which, if aërial and expressive of space and movement, content him, though destitute of story, power, or character: an exception must be made in favour of the very grand Sunrise on the Swiss Alps, exhibited in 1844,[2] wherein the artist's real power was in some measure displayed, though I am convinced he is still capable of doing far greater things. So also in his foliage he is apt to sacrifice the dignity of his trees to their wildness, and lose the forest in the copse; neither is he at all accurate enough in his expression of species or realization of near portions. These are deficiencies, be it observed, of sentiment, not of perception, as there are few who equal him in rapidity of seizure of material truth.

> Harding's are all for impression; mine all for information. Hence my habits of copying are much more accurate than his; and when, as this afternoon, there is anything to be done which is not arrangeable nor manageable, I shall beat him.

The sky of Ruskin's which "beat Harding dead" may be the "Sunset at Baveno," given in Vol. II., opposite p. 232.]

[1] [Instead of "colour and texture; but partly," eds. 3 and 4 read, "colour and texture; a large drawing in the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq., of Tottenham, is of great value as an example of his manner at the period; a manner not only careful, but earnest, and free from any kind of affectation. Partly. . . ."]

[2] ["Berne: Morning as it sometimes wakes among the Alps," No. 26 in the Old Water-Colour Society's Exhibition of 1845 (not 1844). The catalogue contained a long description by the artist of a stormy sunrise seen by him on Sept. 27, 1844, near Berne.]

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§ 25. Samuel Prout. Early painting of architecture, how deficient.

Very extensive influence in modern art must be attributed to the works of Samuel Prout; and as there are some circumstances belonging to his treatment of architectural subjects which it does not come within the sphere of the following chapters to examine, I shall endeavour to note the more important of them here.[1]

Let us glance back for a moment to the architectural drawing of earlier times. Before the time of the Bellinis at Venice, and of Ghirlandajo at Florence, I believe there are no examples of anything beyond conventional representation of architecture; often rich, quaint, and full of interest, as Memmi's abstract of the Duomo at Florence at Sta. Maria Novella,[2] but not to be classed with any genuine efforts at representation. It is much to be regretted that the power and custom of introducing well-drawn architecture should have taken place only when architectural taste had been itself corrupted, and that the architecture introduced by Bellini, Ghirlandajo, Francia, and the other patient and powerful workmen of the fifteenth century, is exclusively of the Renaissance styles; while their drawing of it furnishes little that is of much interest to the architectural draughtsman as such, being always governed by a reference to its subordinate position; so that all forceful shadow and play of colour are (most justly) surrendered for quiet and uniform hues of grey, and chiaroscuro of extreme simplicity. Whatever they chose to do they did with consummate grandeur; note especially the chiaroscuro of the square window of Ghirlandajo's, which so much delighted Vasari,[3] in Sta. Maria Novella; and the

[1] [From here to the end of § 30 is marked by Ruskin in his copy for revision, and noted "Episode on Architectural Drawing." The episode was one result of his "new Italian information" acquired during his tour of 1845.]

[2] [The fresco depicting the Triumph of the Church, on the south wall of the Spanish church: see *Mornings in Florence*, ch. iv. The attribution of the frescoes to Memmi is not now maintained; they are supposed to be the design of Taddeo Gaddi, executed by some other painter, perhaps Andrea Fiorentino. Ruskin had been studying in Santa Maria Novella in 1845 (see *Præterita*, ii. ch. vii. § 126, and Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii.).]

[3] ["In the second story is the Birth of the Virgin, painted with extraordinary care, and among other remarkable parts of this work may be mentioned a window of the building which gives light to the room, and which deceives all who look at it"

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daring management of a piece of the perspective in the Salutation, opposite; where he has painted a flight of stairs, descending in front, though the picture is twelve feet above the eye. And yet this grandeur, in all these men, results rather from the general power obtained in their drawing of the figure, than from any definite knowledge respecting the things introduced in these accessory parts; so that while in some points it is impossible for any painter to equal these accessories, unless he were in all respects as great as Ghirlandajo or Bellini, in others it is possible for him, with far inferior powers, to attain a representation both more accurate and more interesting.

In order to arrive at the knowledge of these we must briefly take a note of a few of the modes in which architecture itself is agreeable to the mind, especially of the influence upon the character of the building which is to be attributed to the signs of age.[1]

§ 26. Effects of age upon buildings, how far desirable.

It is evident, first, that if the design of the building be originally bad, the only virtue it can ever possess will be in signs of antiquity. All that in this world enlarges the sphere of affection or imagination is to be reverenced, and all those circumstances enlarge it which strengthen our memory or quicken our conception of the dead. Hence it is no light sin to destroy anything that is old; more especially because, even with the aid of all obtainable records of the past, we, the living, occupy a space of too large importance and interest in our own eyes; we look upon the world too much as our own, too much as if we had possessed it and should possess it for ever, and forget that it is a mere hostelry, of which we occupy the apartments for a time, which others better than we have sojourned in before, who are now where we should desire to be with them. Fortunately for mankind, as some counterbalance to that

(*Lives of the Artists*, Bohn's ed., 1871, ii. 210). Later, Ruskin criticized severely this fresco and the others by Ghirlandajo in the apse of S. Maria Novella, in *Mornings in Florence*, §§ 17 *seqq.*]

[1] [This subject was afterwards developed in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, ch. vi., "The Lamp of Memory": see especially §§ 9, 20.]

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wretched love of novelty which originates in selfishness, shallowness, and conceit, and which especially characterizes all vulgar minds, there is set in the deeper places of the heart such affection for the signs of age that the eye is delighted even by injuries which are the work of time; not but that there is also real and absolute beauty in the forms and colours so obtained, for which the original lines of the architecture, unless they have been very grand indeed, are well exchanged; so that there is hardly any building so ugly but that it may be made an agreeable object by such appearances. It would not be easy, for instance, to find a less pleasing piece of architecture than the portion of the front of Queen's College, Oxford, which has just been restored;[1] yet I believe that few persons could have looked with total indifference on the mouldering and shattered surface of the oolite limestone, previous to its restoration. If, however, the character of the building consists in minute detail or multitudinous lines, the evil or good effect of age upon it must depend in great measure on the kind of art, the material, and the climate. The Parthenon, for instance, would be injured by any markings which interfered with the contours of its sculptures; and any lines of extreme purity, or colours of original harmony and perfection, are liable to injury, and are ill exchanged for mouldering edges or brown weatherstains.

But as all architecture is, or ought to be, meant to be durable, and to derive part of its glory from its antiquity, all art that is liable to mortal injury from effects of time is therein out of place, and this is another reason for the principle I have asserted in the second section of this part, page 337. I do not at this moment recollect a single instance of any very fine building which is not improved, up to a certain period, by all its signs of age; after which period, like all other human works, it necessarily declines; its decline being, in almost all ages and countries, accelerated

[1] [Built by Wren and his pupil, Hawksmoor, the foundation-stone being laid on Feb. 6, 1714.]

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by neglect and abuse in its time of beauty, and alteration or restoration in its time of age.[1]

Thus I conceive that all buildings dependent on colour, whether of mosaic or painting, have their effect improved by the richness of the subsequent tones of age; for there are few arrangements of colour so perfect but that they are capable of improvement by some softening and blending of this kind: with mosaic, the improvement may be considered as proceeding almost so long as the design can be distinctly seen: with painting, so long as the colours do not change or chip off.

Again, upon all forms of sculptural ornament the effect of time is such, that if the design be poor, it will enrich it; if overcharged, simplify it; if harsh and violent, soften it; if smooth and obscure, exhibit it; whatever faults it may have are rapidly disguised, whatever virtue it has still shines and steals out in the mellow light; and this to such an extent, that the artist is always liable to be tempted to the drawing of details in old buildings as of extreme beauty, which look cold and hard in their architectural lines; and I have never yet seen any restoration or cleaned portion of a building whose effect was not inferior to the weathered parts, even to those of which the design had in some parts almost disappeared. On the front of the Church of San Michele at

[1] [Ruskin had the subject of the destruction and restoration of works of art brought vividly home to him during his Italian tour in 1845. The following passage from a letter to his father shows his temper towards it:—

> *May* 13, 1845.—I have just been turned out of the Campo Santo by a violent storm, and sit down in my little room in a state of embarrassment and desesperance; if one may coin a word to express not despair, but a despairful condition. For the frescoes are certainly much injured even since I was here, and some heads have totally disappeared since the description was written for Murray's guide, and while for want of glass and a good roof these wonderful monuments are rotting every day, the wretches have put scaffolding up round the baptistery, and are putting modern work of the coarsest kind instead of the fine old decayed marble. I do believe that I shall live to see the ruin of everything good and great in the world, and have nothing left to hope for but the fires of the judgment to shrivel up the cursed idiocy of mankind. . . . Why wasn't I born fifty years ago? I should have saved much and seen more, and left the world something like faithful reports of the things that have been, but it is too late now. . . . God preserve us, and give us leave to paint pictures and build churches in heaven that shan't want repairs.

Cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. i. § 7 *n.*]

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Lucca,[1] the mosaics have fallen out of half the columns, and lie in weedy ruin beneath; in many, the frost has torn large masses of the entire coating away, leaving a scarred unsightly surface. Two of the shafts of the upper star window are eaten entirely away by the sea-wind, the rest have lost their proportions; the edges of the arches are hacked into deep hollows, and cast indented shadows on the weed-grown wall. The process has gone too far, and yet I doubt not but that this building is seen to greater advantage now than when first built, always with exception of one circumstance; that the French shattered the lower wheel window, and set up in front of it an escutcheon with "Libertas" upon it, which abomination of desolation[2] the Lucchese have not yet had human-heartedness enough to pull down.[3]

Putting therefore the application of architecture as an

[1] [Ruskin was at Lucca in 1845, and there "began the course of architectural study which reduced under accurate law the vague enthusiasm of his childish taste" (see Epilogue to vol. ii. of *Modern Painters*, § 5, and *Præterita*, ii. ch. vi. § 115). He sketched in water-colour on the spot part of the façade of San Michele. The drawing (from which the accompanying plate is reproduced) is No. 84 in the Educational Series of the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford. A portion of the upper part of the façade was drawn and etched by Ruskin for *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Plate vi.), where the architectural features of the building are discussed (ch. iii.). In 1862 the whole façade was rebuilt, as described in the *Catalogue of the Educational Series*. "The church is now only a modern architect's copy," says Ruskin in a note to Miss A. C. Owen's, *The Art Schools of Mediæval Christendom*, 1876, p. 112. Ruskin made his drawing in May 1845. In a letter to his father (May 6), of which other portions are quoted in the Introduction to Vol. IV., he describes his sitting out in the afternoons to draw the rich ornaments on the façade, and continues:—

> "It is white marble, inlaid with figures cut an inch deep in green porphyry, and framed with carved, rich, hollow marble tracery. I have been up all over it and on the roof to examine it in detail. Such marvellous variety and invention in the ornaments and strange character. Hunting is the principal subject; little Nimrods with short legs and long lances, blowing *tremendous* trumpets, and with dogs which appear running up and down the round arches like flies, heads uppermost, and game of all descriptions, boars chiefly, but stags, tapirs, griffins, and dragons, and indescribably innumerable, all cut out in hard green porphyry and inlaid in the marble. The frost, where the details are fine, has got underneath the inlaid pieces, and has in many places rent them off, tearing up the intermediate marble together with them, so as to *uncoat* the building an inch thick. Fragments of the carved porphyry are lying about everywhere. I have brought away three or four and restored *all* I could to their places.]

[2] [Matthew, xxiv. 15; Mark, xiii. 14.]

[3] [Ruskin described this barbarism in a letter to his father (May 9, 1845):—

> "There is an exquisite star window at the end of the Church of St. Michele, carved like lace. The French nailed up against it, destroying all the centre for ever, a great Louis-quatorze escutcheon (which these wretches of Lucchese

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San Michele, Lucca, (1845.)

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accessory out of the question, and supposing our object to be the exhibition of the most impressive qualities of the building itself, it is evidently the duty of the draughtsman to represent it under those conditions, and with that amount of age-mark upon it which may best exalt and harmonize the sources of its beauty. This is no pursuit of mere picturesqueness; it is true following out of the ideal character of the building. Nay, far greater dilapidation than this may in portions be exhibited; for there are beauties of other kinds, not otherwise attainable, brought out by advanced dilapidation: but when the artist suffers the mere love of ruinousness to interfere with his perception of the *art* of the building, and substitutes rude fractures and blotting stains for all its fine chiselling and determined colour, he has lost the end of his own art.

§ 27. Effects of light, how necessary to the understanding of detail.

So far of ageing; next of effects of light and colour. It is, I believe, hardly enough observed among architects, that the same decorations are of totally different effect according to their position and the time of day. A moulding which is of value on a building facing south, where it takes dark shadows from steep sun, may be utterly ineffective if placed west or east; and a moulding which is chaste and intelligible in shade on a north side may be grotesque, vulgar, or confused when it takes black shadows on the south. Farther, there is a time of day in which every architectural decoration is seen to best advantage, and certain times in which its peculiar force and character are best explained. Of these niceties the architect takes little cognizance, as he must in some sort calculate on the effect of ornament at all times: but to the artist they are of infinite importance, and especially for this reason: that there is always much detail on buildings which cannot be drawn as such, which is too far off, or too minute, and which must consequently be set down in shorthand of some kind

haven't spirit enough to pull down) with 'Libertas' upon it, and they have mosaiced a tricolor into the middle of an inscription of the fifteenth century in the cathedral. I'm only afraid they haven't human soul enough even to be damned."]

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or another; and, as it were, an abstract, more or less philosophical, made of its general heads. Of the style of this abstract, of the lightness, confusion, and mystery necessary in it, I have spoken elsewhere;[1] at present I insist only on the arrangement and matter of it. All good ornament and all good architecture are capable of being put into shorthand; that is, each has a perfect system of parts, principal and subordinate, of which, even when the complemental details vanish in distance, the system and anatomy yet remain visible, so long as anything is visible: so that the divisions of a beautiful spire shall be known as beautiful even till their last line vanishes in blue mist; and the effect of a well-designed moulding shall be visibly disciplined, harmonious, and inventive, as long as it is seen to be a moulding at all. Now the power of the artist of marking this character depends not on his complete knowledge of the design, but on his experimental knowledge of its salient and bearing parts, and of the effects of light and shadow, by which their saliency is best told. He must therefore be prepared, according to his subject, to use light steep or level, intense or feeble, and out of the resulting chiaroscuro select those peculiar and hinging points on which the rest are based, and by which all else that is essential may be explained.

The thoughtful command of all these circumstances constitutes the real architectural draughtsman; the habits of executing everything either under one kind of effect or in one manner, or of using unintelligible and meaningless abstracts of beautiful designs, are those which most commonly take the place of it and are the most extensively esteemed.*

Let us now proceed with our view of those artists who have devoted themselves more peculiarly to architectural subject.

* I have not given any examples in this place, because it is difficult to explain such circumstances of effect without diagrams; I purpose entering into fuller discussion of the subject with the aid of illustration.[2]

[1] [*Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iv. §§ 14 *seqq.* That volume had appeared six months before the edition of the first volume in which these passages first occurred.]

[2] [*Cf.* below, § 30 *n.*]

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Foremost among them stand Gentile Bellini[1] and Vittor Carpaccio,[2] to whom we are indebted for the only existing faithful statements of the architecture of Old Venice; and who are the only authorities to whom we can trust in conjecturing the former beauty of those few desecrated fragments, the last of which are now being rapidly swept away by the idiocy of modern Venetians.

§ 28. *Architectural painting of Gentile Bellini and Vittor Carpaccio;*

Nothing can be more careful, nothing more delicately finished, or more dignified in feeling, than the works of both these men; and as architectural evidence they are the best we could have had, all the gilded parts being gilt in the picture, so that there can be no mistake or confusion of them with yellow colour on light, and all the frescoes or mosaics given with the most absolute precision and fidelity. At the same time they are by no means examples of perfect architectural drawing; there is little light and shade in them of any kind, and none whatever of the thoughtful observance of temporary effect of which we have just been speaking; so that, in rendering the character of the relieved parts, their solidity, depth, or gloom, the representation fails altogether, and it is moreover lifeless from its very completion, both the signs of age and the effects of use and habitation being utterly rejected; rightly so, indeed, in these instances (all the architecture of these painters being in background to religious subject), but wrongly so if we look to the architecture alone. Neither is there anything like aërial perspective attempted; the employment of actual gold in the decoration of all the distances, and the entire realization of their details, as far as is possible on the scale compelled by perspective, being alone sufficient to prevent this, except in the hands of painters far more practised in effect

[1] [Gentile Bellini's architectural painting came to be discussed in more detail in the *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice*, ed. 1891, pp. 20–25. Bellini's Church of St. Mark's is in that gallery.]

[2] [Ruskin's first mention of a painter whom in after years he came to regard as "faultless" and "consummate": see *Verona and its Rivers*, § 22; *Lectures on Art*, § 73; letter to Sir Edward Burne-Jones of May 13, 1869; *Guide to the Academy at Venice; St. Mark's Rest;* and *Fors Clavigera* for 1872, 1873, 1876, and 1877. In the *Stones of Venice* Carpaccio is referred to, as here, only for his interesting pieces of Venetian architecture.]

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than either Gentile or Carpaccio. But with all these discrepancies, Gentile Bellini's Church of St. Mark's is the best Church of St. Mark's that has ever been painted, so far as I know;[1] and I believe the reconciliation of true aërial perspective and chiaroscuro with the splendour and dignity obtained by the real gilding and elaborate detail, is a problem yet to be accomplished. With the help of the daguerreotype,[2] and the lessons of colour given by the later Venetians, we ought now to be able to accomplish it; more especially as the right use of gold has been shown us by the greatest master of effect whom Venice herself produced, Tintoret;[3] who has employed

[1] [At a later time Ruskin devoted no inconsiderable portion of his energy and fortune to procuring faithful pictorial transcripts of French and Italian buildings. Among the works thus painted for him was the oil-painting of the west front of St. Mark's by J. W. Bunney, which is now at the Ruskin Museum in Sheffield; see the account of that museum in a later volume of this edition.]

[2] [In a letter to his father from Venice (Oct. 7, 1845) Ruskin writes:—

> "I have been lucky enough to get from a poor Frenchman here, said to be in distress, some most beautiful, though very small, Daguerreotypes of the palaces I have been trying to draw; and certainly Daguerreotypes taken by this vivid sunlight are glorious things. It is very nearly the same thing as carrying off the palace itself; every chip of stone and stain is there, and of course there is no mistake about proportions. I am very much delighted with these, and am going to have some more made of pet bits. It is a noble invention—say what they will of it—and any one who has worked and blundered and stammered as I have done for four days, and then sees the thing he has been trying to do so long in vain, done perfectly and faultlessly in half a minute, won't abuse it afterwards. (Oct. 8). I am quite delighted with my Daguerreotypes; if I can get a few more, I shall regularly do the Venetians—book them in spite of their teeth."

For his plans at this time for daguerreotype illustration of Venice, see below, § 30, p. 213. The plates referred to in this letter are still preserved at Brantwood. Ruskin mentions in another letter (Oct. 25) that they cost him twenty napoleons. In another (Padua, Oct. 15) he says: "Among all the mechanical poison that this terrible 19th century has poured upon men, it has given us at any rate one antidote—the Daguerreotype. It's a most blessed invention; that's what it is." In the following year Ruskin wrote from Vevay (to W. H. Harrison, Aug. 12):—

> "My drawings are truth to the very letter—too literal, perhaps; so says my father, so says not the Daguerreotype, for it beats me grievously. I have allied myself with it; sith it may no better be, and have brought away some precious records from Florence. It is certainly the most marvellous invention of the century; given us, I think, just in time to save some evidence from the great public of wreckers. As regards art, I wish it had never been discovered, it will make the eye too fastidious to accept mere handling."

His enthusiasm for the invention was somewhat modified in after years, though he still considered photographs invaluable for records of some kind of facts, and especially of buildings. See *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. iv. § 11; *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. iv. § 3 *n.*; *The Cestus of Aglaia*, § 103; *Lectures on Art*, § 172; *Aratra Pentelici*, preface, § 2 *n.*]

[3] ["I never was so utterly crushed to the earth before any human intellect," writes Ruskin to his father from Venice (Sept. 24, 1845), "as I was to-day before

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it with infinite grace on the steps ascended by the young Madonna, in his large picture in the Church of the Madonna dell' Orto.[1] Perugino uses it also with singular grace, often employing it for golden light on distant trees, and continually on the high light of hair, and that without losing relative distance.

§ 29. *And of the Venetians generally.*

The great group of Venetian painters who brought landscape art, for that time, to its culminating point, have left, as we have already seen,[2] little that is instructive in architectural painting. The causes of this I cannot comprehend, for neither Titian nor Tintoret appears to despise anything that affords either variety of form or of colour, the latter especially condescending to very trivial details,—as in the magnificent carpet painting of the picture of the doge Mocenigo;[3] so that it might have been expected that in the rich colours of St. Mark's, and the magnificent and fantastic masses of the Byzantine palaces, they would have found whereupon to dwell with delighted elaboration. This is, however, never the case; and although frequently compelled to introduce portions of Venetian locality in their backgrounds, such portions are always treated in a most hasty and faithless manner, missing frequently all character of the building, and never advanced to realization. In Titian's picture of Faith,[4] the view of Venice below is laid in so rapidly and slightly, the houses all leaning this way and that, and of no colour, the sea a dead grey-green, and the ship-sails mere dashes of the brush, that the most obscure of Turner's Venices would look substantial beside it; while Tintoret, in the very picture in which he has dwelt so elaborately on the carpet, has substituted a piece of ordinary Renaissance composition for St. Mark's; and in the background has chosen the Sansovino side of the Piazzetta, treating even that so carelessly as to lose all the

Tintoret." See Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., and the further passages from Ruskin's diary given in the Introduction to that volume (Vol. IV. of this edition).]

[1] ["The Presentation of the Virgin;" see notice under "Orto" in *Stones of Venice*, Venetian index.]

[2] [Above, §§ 12, 25, pp. 183, 202.]

[3] [No. 27 in the Venetian Academy.]

[4] ["The Doge Grimani before Faith," in the Sala delle Quattro Porte, Ducal Palace; see *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. ch. i. § 14, and vol. iii. (Venetian index, *s.* Ducal Palace, No. 3.]

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proportion and beauty of its design, and so flimsily that the line of the distant sea, which has been first laid in, is seen through all the columns. Evidences of magnificent power of course exist in whatever he touches, but his full power is never turned in this direction. More space is allowed to his architecture by Paul Veronese, but it is still entirely suggestive, and would be utterly false except as a frame or background for figures. The same may be said with respect to Raffaelle and the Roman school.

§ 30. Fresco painting of the Venetian exteriors. Canaletto.

If, however, these men laid architecture little under contribution to their own art, they made their own art a glorious gift to architecture; and the walls of Venice, which before, I believe, had received colour only in arabesque patterns, were lighted with human life by Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese. Of the works of Tintoret and Titian, nothing now, I believe, remains. Two figures of Giorgione's are still traceable on the Fondaco de' Tedeschi, one of which, singularly uninjured, is seen from far above and below the Rialto, flaming like the reflection of a sunset.[1] Two figures of Veronese were also traceable till lately: the head and arms of one still remain, and some glorious olive branches which were beside the other; the figure having been entirely effaced by an inscription in large black letters on a whitewash tablet, which we owe to the somewhat inopportunely expressed enthusiasm of the inhabitants

[1] [In a letter to his father from Venice (Oct. 4, 1845) Ruskin writes:—

"As to taking common loose sketches in a hackneyed place like Venice, it is utter folly. One wants just what other artists have not done, and what I am as yet nearly unable to do. The splendid feature they have always omitted . . . is the fresco painting of the exteriors. Whole houses have been covered by Titian, Giorgione, and Paul Veronese; and as all three painted brighter and better in fresco than in oil, especially the latter, imagine what Venice must have been with these hues blazing down into the sea and up again! There is a fragment or two of Giorgione left yet on one palace, purple and scarlet, more like a sunset than a painting, and I was much pleased by two or three grey figures of Veronese; Titian has perished, through ill-treatment only, salt wind and rain do nothing compared to men."

See also *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi. § 32 and *n.*, and Plate 79; and cf. *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. ch. iv. § 28, vol. iii. ch. i. § 35, and Venetian index. The Fondaco de' Tedeschi, a German warehouse, was decorated with frescoes by Giorgione and Titian; a few years ago vestiges remained of Giorgione's "Hesperid Aeglé" on the side facing the Grand Canal, and of a "Justice" by Titian above the door in the side lane.]

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Ruskin. Allen & Co. Sc.

Casa Contarini Fasan, Venice.
(1841)

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of the district in favour of their new pastor.* Judging, however, from the rate at which destruction is at present advancing, and seeing that in about seven or eight years more Venice will have utterly lost every external claim to interest, except that which attaches to the group of buildings immediately around St. Mark's Place, and to the larger churches, it may be conjectured that the greater part of her present degradation has taken place, at any rate, within the last forty years. Let the reader, with such scraps of evidence as may still be gleaned from under the stucco and paint of the Italian committees of taste, and from among the drawing-room innovations of English and German residents, restore Venice in his imagination to some resemblance of what she must have been before her fall. Let him, looking from Lido or Fusina, replace, in the forests of towers, those of the hundred and sixty-six churches which the French threw down;[1] let him sheet her

* The inscription is to the following effect,—a pleasant thing to see upon the walls, were it but more innocently placed :—

CAMPO DI S. MAURIZIO.

DIO
CONSERVI A NOI
LUNGAMENTE
LO ZELANTIS. E REVERENDIS.
D. LUIGI PICCINI
NOSTRO
NOVELLO PIEVANO.

GLI ESULTANTI
PARROCCHIANI.

[1] *i.e.* after the surrender of the Venetian Republic to Napoleon on May 16, 1797. The French occupied the city 1797–98, and again 1806–14. "No city of Italy suffered so fatally as Venice. One hundred and sixty-six noble churches were demolished; amongst these was the church of the Servi, one of the finest in Italy. The monuments were broken to pieces; the marbles sold as rubbish, and the bronzes as old metal; the libraries and galleries plundered, the archives destroyed, the subsisting buildings damaged and degraded and defaced out of mere wantonness; and the city reduced to what it now is, a mere shadow of its ancient splendour" ("Letter from a Resident," cited in the first edition, 1842, of Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*,

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walls with purple and scarlet, overlay her minarets with gold,* cleanse from their pollution those choked canals which are now the drains of hovels, where they were once vestibules of palaces, and fill them with gilded barges and bannered ships; finally, let him withdraw from this scene, already so brilliant, such sadness and stain as had been set upon it by the declining energies of more than half a century, and he will see Venice as it was seen by Canaletto; whose miserable, virtueless, heartless mechanism, accepted as the representation of such various glory, is, both in its existence and acceptance, among the most striking signs of the lost sensation and deadened intellect of the nation at that time; a numbness and darkness more without hope than that of the Grave itself, holding and wearing yet the sceptre and the crown, like the corpses of the Etruscan kings, ready to sink into ashes at the first unbarring of the door of the sepulchre.

* The quantity of gold with which the decorations of Venice were once covered could not now be traced or credited without reference to the authority of Gentile Bellini. The greater part of the marble mouldings have been touched with it in lines and points, the minarets of St. Mark's, and all the florid carving of the arches entirely sheeted. The Casa d'Oro retained it on its lions until the recent commencement of its restoration.[1]

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p. 328). "The eight years of French rule at Venice has left very different traces on that beautiful city than those left by the eight years of Austrian rule, which immediately preceded [1798–1806]. Everywhere in Venice even now may be seen the mark of Napoleon. It was by his order that the old structures at the eastern extremity of the city were demolished, among them being a church, and the beautiful Public Gardens created" (E. Flagg: *Venice, City of the Sea*, 1853).]

[1] [In a letter to his father from Venice (Sept. 21, 1845) Ruskin writes:—

"I am sorry that you are expecting me to leave Venice so soon, and far more sorry that I cannot do so. Be assured, it is misery to me to stop here; but every hour is destructive of what I most value, and I must do what I can to save a little. On the Ca' d'Oro, the noblest palace of the Grand Canal, the stone masons are hard at work, and of all its once noble cornice there remains one fragment only. Had that gone, as in a day or two more it will, all knowledge of the contour of this noble building would have been lost for ever. . . . (Sept. 23.) You cannot imagine what an unhappy day I spent yesterday before the Casa d'Oro—vainly attempting to draw it while the workmen were hammering it down before my face. . . . Venice has never yet been painted as she should—never, and to see the thing just in one's grasp and snatched away by these—'porci battigati' as I heard a Jew call out with infinitive justice the other day, it is too bad, far too bad. The beauty of the fragments left is beyond all I conceived; and just as I am becoming able to appreciate it, and able to do something that would have kept record of it, to have it destroyed before my face! That foul son of a deal board—Canaletti—to have lived in the middle of it all and left us nothing!"]

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The mannerism of Canaletto is the most degraded that I know in the whole range of art. Professing the most servile and mindless imitation, it imitates nothing but the blackness of the shadows; it gives no single architectural ornament, however near, so much form as might enable us even to guess at its actual one; and this I say not rashly, for I shall prove it by placing portions of detail accurately copied from Canaletto side by side with engravings from the daguerreotype:[1] it gives the buildings neither their architectural beauty nor their ancestral dignity, for there is no texture of stone nor character of age in Canaletto's touch; which is invariably a violent, black, sharp, ruled penmanlike line, as far removed from the grace of nature as from her faintness and transparency: and for his truth of colour, let the single fact of his having omitted *all record whatsoever of the frescoes* whose wrecks are still to be found at least on one half of the unrestored palaces, and, with still less excusableness, all record of the magnificent coloured marbles, many of whose greens and purples are still undimmed upon the Casa Dario, Casa Trevisan, and multitudes besides, speak for him in this respect.[2]

Let it be observed that I find no fault with Canaletto for his want of poetry, of feeling, of artistical thoughtfulness in treatment, or of the various other virtues which he does not so much as profess. He professes nothing but coloured daguerreotypeism. Let us have it; most precious and to be revered it would be: let us have fresco where fresco was, and that copied faithfully; let us have carving where carving is, and that architecturally true. I have seen daguerreotypes[3] in which every figure and rosette, and crack and stain, and fissure is given on a scale of an inch to Canaletto's three feet. What excuse is there to be offered for his omitting, on that scale, as I shall hereafter show, all statement of such ornament whatever? Among the Flemish schools, exquisite imitations

[1] [This is one of many schemes of the kind which Ruskin did not carry out; *cf.* above, § 27 *n.*]

[2] [See the coloured plate—"Wall Veil Decoration, Ca' Trevisan, Ca' Dario"—in vol. i. of *Stones of Venice.*]

[3] [See above, p. 210 *n.*]

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of architecture are found constantly, and that not with Canaletto's vulgar black exaggeration of shadow, but in the most pure and silvery and luminous greys. I have little pleasure in such pictures; but I blame not those who have more; they are what they profess to be, and they are wonderful and instructive, and often graceful, and even affecting; but Canaletto possesses no virtue except that of dexterous imitation of commonplace light and shade;[1] and perhaps, with the exception of Salvator, no artist has ever fettered his unfortunate admirers more securely from all healthy or vigorous perception of truth, or been of more general detriment to all subsequent schools.

§ 31. *Expression of the effects of age on architecture by S. Prout.*

Neither, however, by the Flemings, nor by any other of the elder schools, was the effect of age or of human life upon architecture ever adequately expressed. What ruins they drew looked as if broken down on purpose; what weeds they put on seemed put on for ornament. Their domestic buildings had never any domesticity; the people looked out of their windows evidently to be drawn, or came into the street only to stand there for ever. A peculiar studiousness infected all accident; bricks fell out methodically, windows opened and shut by rule; stones were chipped at regular intervals; everything that happened seemed to have been expected before; and above all, the street had been washed and the houses dusted expressly to be painted in their best. We owe to Prout,[2] I

[1] [*Cf.* on this latter point pt. ii. sec. v. ch. i. § 12 *n.* (eds. 1 and 2), p. 522, and for many other references to Canaletto in *Modern Painters* and elsewhere, see index volume to this edition. In the *Stones of Venice* (Venetian index, *s.* "Carità") Ruskin remarks that Canaletto is "less to be trusted for renderings of details, than the rudest and most ignorant painter of the thirteenth century." Yet in after years Ruskin came to admit to Canaletto one merit—his pigments endured: "Ruskin, on one of his latest visits to the National Gallery (1887), confessed that he had found himself admiring Canaletto. 'After all,' he said to me, 'he was a good workman in oils, whereas so much of Turner's work is going to rack and ruin.' Ruskin had made a similar concession long before to Claude. Writing to Mr. Fawkes on the death of Turner, he mentions a rumour that the artist had left only his finished pictures to the nation. 'Alas! these are finished in a double sense—nothing but chilled fragments of paint on rotten canvas. The Claudites will have a triumph when they get into the National Gallery' (quoted in *The Nineteenth Century*, April 1900)." (Note in E. T. Cook's *Popular Handbook to the National Gallery*, ed. 1901, i. 165.)]

[2] [Samuel Prout (1783–1852) was a friend of Ruskin's father, and his drawings were among those with which Ruskin himself was first familiar, and served as the models for his own exercises in art. The admiration here expressed for them was reiterated and

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believe, the first perception, and certainly the only existing expression, of precisely the characters which were wanting to old art; of that feeling which results from the influence, among the noble lines of architecture, of the rent and the rust, the fissure, the lichen, and the weed, and from the writing upon the pages of ancient walls of the confused hieroglyphics of human history. I suppose, from the deserved popularity of the artist, that the strange pleasure which I find myself in the deciphering of these is common to many. The feeling has been rashly and thoughtlessly contemned as mere love of the picturesque; there is, as I have above shown, a deeper moral in it, and we owe much, I am not prepared to say how much, to the artist by whom pre-eminently it has been excited: for, numerous as have been his imitators, extended as his influence, and simple as his means and manner, there has yet appeared nothing at all to equal him; there is *no* stone drawing, *no* vitality of architecture like Prout's. I say not this rashly: I remember Mackenzie and Haghe,[1] and many other capital imitators; and I have carefully reviewed the architectural work of the Academicians, often most accurate and elaborate. I repeat there is nothing but the work of Prout which is true, living, or right, in its general impression, and nothing, therefore, so inexhaustibly agreeable. Faults he has, manifold, easily detected, and much declaimed against by second-rate artists; but his excellence no one has ever approached, and his lithographic work (Sketches in Flanders and Germany),[2] which was, I believe, the first of the kind, still remains the most valuable of all, numerous and elaborate as its various successors

developed by Ruskin in later years; see especially the essay on Prout from the *Art Journal* (1849) and the *Notes on Prout and Hunt* (1879–80). For Prout's criticism on this first volume of *Modern Painters*, see above, Introduction, p. xlii., and a reply by Ruskin below, Appendix iii., p. 662. *Cf.* also the 1st edition, below, p. 256.]

[1] [For "I remember Mackenzie and Haghe," eds. 3 and 4 read, "I have Mackenzie in my eye." Frederick Mackenzie (1787–1854), member of the Old Water-Colour Society, was noted for his conscientious drawings of ancient buildings. Louis Haghe (1806–1885), president of the New Water-Colour Society and member of the Belgian Academy, received the gold medal at Paris in 1834 for his works in lithography (condemned by Ruskin below, § 33); there is a collection of Roman drawings by him at the Bethnal Green Museum.]

[2] [This work had some influence on Ruskin's early history: see Vol. I. p. xxix. The later *Sketches in France, Switzerland, and Italy* had appeared in 1839.]

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have been. The second series (in Italy and Switzerland) was of less value: the drawings seemed more laborious, and had less of the life of the original sketches, being also for the most part of subjects less adapted for the development of the artist's peculiar powers; but both are fine; and the Brussels, Louvain, Cologne, and Nuremberg subjects of the one, together with the Tours, Amboise, Geneva, and Sion of the other, exhibit substantial qualities of stone and wood drawing, together with an ideal appreciation of the present active and vital being of the cities, such as nothing else has ever approached. Their value is much increased by the circumstance of their being drawn by the artist's own hand upon the stone, and by the consequent manly recklessness of subordinate parts (in works of this kind, be it remembered, much *is* subordinate), which is of all characters of execution the most refreshing. Note the scrawled middle tint of the wall behind the Gothic well at Ratisbonne, and compare this manly piece of work with the wretched smoothness of recent lithography. Let it not be thought that there is any inconsistency between what I say here and what I have said respecting finish.[1] This piece of dead wall is as much finished in relation to its *function*, as the masonries of Ghirlandajo or Leonardo in relation to theirs; and the refreshing quality is the same in both, and manifest in *all* great masters, without exception,—that of the utter regardlessness of the means so that their end be reached. The same kind of scrawling occurs often in the shade of Raffaelle.

§ 32. His excellent composition and colour.

It is not, however, only by his peculiar stone touch, nor by his perception of human character, that he is distinguished. He is the most dexterous of all our artists in a certain kind of composition.[2] No one can place figures as he can, except Turner. It is one thing to know where a piece of blue or white is wanted, and another to make the wearer of the blue apron or white cap come there, and not look as if it were against her will. Prout's streets are

[1] [In this chapter, above, § 10.]
[2] [*Cf.* on this point *Notes on Prout and Hunt*, pref. § 34, etc.]

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the only streets that are accidentally crowded; his markets the only markets where one feels inclined to get out of the way. With others we feel the figures so right where they are, that we have no expectation of their going anywhere else; and approve of the position of the man with the wheelbarrow, without the slightest fear of his running it against our legs. One other merit he has, far less generally acknowledged than it should be; he is among our most sunny and substantial colourists. Much conventional colour occurs in his inferior pictures (for he is very unequal), and some in all; but portions are always of quality so luminous and pure, that I have found these works the only ones capable of bearing juxtaposition with Turner and Hunt,[1] who invariably destroy everything else that comes within range of them. His most beautiful tones occur in those drawings in which there is prevalent and powerful warm grey; his most failing ones in those of sandy red. On his deficiencies I shall not insist, because I am not prepared to say how far it is possible for him to avoid them. We have never seen the reconciliation of the peculiar characters he has obtained, with the accurate following out of architectural detail. With his present modes of execution, farther fidelity is impossible, nor has any other mode of execution yet obtained the same results; and though much is unaccomplished by him in certain subjects, and something of over-mannerism may be traced in his treatment of others, as especially in his mode of expressing the decorative parts of Greek or Roman architecture, yet in his own peculiar Gothic territory, where the spirit of the subject itself is somewhat rude and grotesque, his abstract of decoration has more of the spirit of the reality than far more laborious imitation.* The spirit of the Flemish Hôtel de Ville and decorated street architecture has never been, even in the slightest degree, felt or conveyed except by him, and by him, to my mind, faultlessly and absolutely; and though his interpretation of

* Compare *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. chap. xxiii. § v.[2]

[1] [For William Hunt, see *Notes on Prout and Hunt.*]
[2] [This note was added in ed. 5.]

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architecture that contains more refined art in its details is far less satisfactory, still it is impossible, while walking on his favourite angle of the Piazza at Venice, either to think of any other artist than Prout or *not* to think of *him*.

§ 33. *Modern architectural painting generally. G. Cattermole.*

Many other dexterous and agreeable architectural artists we have, of various degrees of merit, but of all of whom, it may be generally said, that they draw hats, faces, cloaks, and caps much better than Prout, but *figures* not so well: that they draw walls and windows, but not cities; mouldings and buttresses, but not cathedrals. Joseph Nash's work on the architecture of the Middle Ages[1] is, however, valuable, and I suppose that Haghe's works may be depended on for fidelity. But it appears very strange that a workman capable of producing the clever drawings he has, from time to time, sent to the New Society of Painters in Water Colours, should publish lithographs so conventional, forced, and lifeless.

It is not without hesitation, that I mention a name respecting which the reader may already have been surprised at my silence, that of G. Cattermole.[2] There are signs in his works of very peculiar gifts, and perhaps also of powerful genius; their deficiencies I should willingly attribute to the advice of ill-judging friends, and to the applause of a public satisfied with shallow efforts, if brilliant; yet I cannot but think it one necessary characteristic of all true genius to be misled by no such false fires. The antiquarian feeling of Cattermole is pure, earnest, and natural; and I think his imagination originally vigorous, certainly his fancy, his grasp of momentary passion considerable, his sense of action in the human body vivid and ready. But no original talent, however brilliant, can sustain its energy when the demands upon it are constant, and all legitimate support and food withdrawn. I do not recollect in any, even of the most important of Cattermole's works, so much as a fold of drapery studied out

[1] [*Architecture of the Middle Ages, drawn from Nature and on Stone*, by Joseph Nash, 1838.]

[2] [*Cf.* above, pref. to 2nd ed., § 40 n., p. 46.]

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from nature. Violent conventionalism of light and shade, sketchy forms continually less and less developed, the walls and the faces drawn with the same stucco colour, alike opaque, and all the shades on flesh, dress, or stone, laid in with the same arbitrary brown, for ever tell the same tale of a mind wasting its strength and substance in the production of emptiness, and seeking, by more and more blindly hazarded handling, to conceal the weakness which the attempt at finish would betray.

This tendency has of late been painfully visible in his architecture. Some drawings made several years ago for an Annual, illustrative of Scott's works,[1] were, for the most part, pure and finely felt,—though irrelevant to our present subject, a fall of the Clyde should be noticed, admirable for breadth and grace of foliage, and for the bold sweeping of the water; and another subject of which I regret that I can only judge by the engraving, Glendearg, at twilight (the monk Eustace chased by Christie of the Clint hill), which I think must have been one of the sweetest pieces of simple Border hill feeling ever painted;—and about that time, his architecture, though always conventionally brown in the shadows, was generally well drawn, and always powerfully conceived.

Since then, he has been tending gradually through exaggeration to caricature, and vainly endeavouring to attain, by inordinate bulk of decorated parts, that dignity which is only to be reached by purity of proportion and majesty of line.

§ 34. The evil, from an archæological point of view, of misapplied invention, in architectural subject.

It has pained me deeply, to see an artist of so great original power indulging in childish fantasticism and exaggeration, and substituting for the serious and subdued work of legitimate imagination monster machicolations, and colossal cusps and crockets. While there is so much beautiful architecture daily in process of destruction around us, I cannot but think it treason to *imagine* anything; at least, if we must

[1] [*Heath's Picturesque Annual* for 1835, also entitled *Scott and Scotland* (by Leith Ritchie), contained twenty-one plates by Cattermole. The subject of the drawing of Glendearg would specially have interested Ruskin: see his *Poems*, Vol. II. p. 260 *n.*]

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have composition, let the design of the artist be such as the architect would applaud. But it is surely very grievous, that while our idle artists are helping their vain inventions by the fall of sponges on soiled paper, glorious buildings with the whole intellect and history of centuries concentrated in them are suffered to fall into unrecorded ruin. A day does not now pass in Italy without the destruction of some mighty monument; the streets of all her cities echo to the hammer; half of her fair buildings lie in separate stones about the places of their foundation: would not time be better spent in telling us the truth about these perishing remnants of majestic thought, than in perpetuating the ill-digested fancies of idle hours? It is, I repeat, treason to the cause of art, for any man to invent, unless he invents something better than has been invented before, or something differing in kind. There is room enough for invention in the pictorial treatment of what exists. There is no more honourable exhibition of imaginative power, than in the selection of such place, choice of such treatment, introduction of such incident, as may produce a noble picture without deviation from one line of the actual truth: and such I believe to be, indeed, in the end the most advantageous, as well as the most modest direction of the invention; for I recollect no single instance of architectural composition by any men except such as Leonardo or Veronese (who could design their architecture thoroughly before they painted it),[1] which has not a look of inanity and absurdity. The best landscapes and the best architectural studies have been views; and I would have the artist take shame to himself in the exact degree in which he finds himself obliged in the production of his picture to lose any, even of the smallest parts or most trivial hues which bear a part in the great impression made by the reality. The difference between the drawing of the architect and artist* ought never to be, as it now commonly

* Indeed there should be no such difference at all. Every architect ought to be an artist; every very great artist is necessarily an architect.[2]

[1] [The brackets here are inserted from Ruskin's copy for revision.]

[2] [Cf. *Poetry of Architecture*, § 1, where it is said that every architect must also be a metaphysician, and see note thereon, Vol. I. p. 5.]

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is, the difference between lifeless formality and witless license; it ought to be between giving the mere lines and measures of a building, and giving those lines and measures with the impression and soul of it besides. All artists should be ashamed of themselves when they find they have not the power of being true; the right wit of drawing is like the right wit of conversation, not hyperbole, not violence, not frivolity, only well expressed, laconic truth.

§ 35. Works of David Roberts: their fidelity and grace.

Among the members of the Academy, we have at present only one professedly architectural draughtsman of note, David Roberts;[1] whose reputation is probably farther extended on the continent than that of any other of our artists, except Landseer. I am not certain, however, that I have any reason to congratulate either of my countrymen upon this their European estimation; for I think it exceedingly probable that in both instances it is exclusively based on their defects; and in the case of Mr. Roberts in particular, there has of late appeared more ground for it than is altogether desirable, in a smoothness and over-finish of texture which bear dangerous fellowship with the work of our Gallic neighbours.

The fidelity of intention and honesty of system of Roberts have, however, always been meritorious; his drawing of architecture is dependent on no unintelligible lines or blots, or substituted types; the main lines of the real design are always there, and its hollowness and undercuttings given with exquisite feeling; his sense of solidity of form is very peculiar, leading him to dwell with great delight on the roundings of edges and angles; his execution is dexterous and delicate, singularly so in oil, and his sense of chiaroscuro refined. But he has never done himself justice, and suffers his pictures to

[1] [David Roberts (1796–1864), A.R.A. 1839, R.A. 1841, was a friend of the family, and sometimes joined the dinner-party with which Ruskin's father celebrated his son's birthday (Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. §§ 1, 14). In the spring of 1840, Roberts had brought home and exhibited the sketches in the Holy Land referred to in the text; for their influence on Ruskin's own practice, see *Præterita*, ii. ch. ii. § 20. Elsewhere in that book (ii. ch. ix. § 175) Ruskin characterises Roberts' work in the phrase: "He was like a kind of grey mirror." For other criticisms of Roberts, see *Academy Notes*, 1855–59, where his later work is contrasted unfavourably with his earlier.]

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fall below the rank they should assume, by the presence of several marring characters, which I shall name, because it is perfectly in his power to avoid them. In looking over the valuable series of drawings of the Holy Land, which we owe to Mr. Roberts, we cannot but be amazed to find how frequently it has happened that there was something very white immediately in the foreground, and something very black exactly behind it. The same thing happens perpetually with Mr. Roberts's pictures; a white column is always coming out of a blue mist, or a white stone out of a green pool, or a white monument out of a brown recess, and the artifice is not always concealed with dexterity. This is unworthy of so skilful a composer, and it has destroyed the impressiveness as well as the colour of some of his finest works. It shows a poverty of conception, which appears to me to arise from a deficient habit of study. It will be remembered that of the sketches for this work, several times exhibited in London, every one was executed in the same manner, and with about the same degree of completion; being all of them accurate records of the main architectural lines, the shapes of the shadows, and the remnants of artificial colour, obtained by means of the same greys throughout, and of the same yellow (a singularly false and cold though convenient colour) touched upon the lights. As far as they went, nothing could be more valuable than these sketches; and the public, glancing rapidly at their general and graceful effects, could hardly form anything like an estimate of the endurance and determination which must have been necessary in such a climate to obtain records so patient, entire, and clear, of details so multitudinous as, especially, the hieroglyphics of the Egyptian temples; an endurance which perhaps only artists can estimate, and for which we owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Roberts, most difficult to discharge.[1] But if these sketches were all that the artist brought home, whatever value is to be attached to them as

[1] [Roberts was in the East, 1838–40. His diary of his adventures is in chs. v.–viii. of the *Life* of him by James Ballantine (1866). His sketches were exhibited on his return, in 1841, preparatory to their publication (see below, p. 598 n.).]

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statements of facts, they are altogether insufficient for the producing of pictures. I saw among them no single instance of a downright study; of a study in which the real hues and shades of sky and earth had been honestly realized or attempted; nor were there, on the other hand, any of those invaluable blotted five-minutes works which record the unity of some single and magnificent impressions. Hence the pictures which have been painted from these sketches have been as much alike in their want of impressiveness as the sketches themselves, and have never borne the living aspect of the Egyptian light; it has always been impossible to say whether the red in them (not a pleasant one) was meant for hot sunshine or for red sandstone: their power has been farther destroyed by the necessity the artist seems to feel himself under of eking out their effect by points of bright foreground colour; and thus we have been encumbered with caftans, pipes, scimitars, and black hair, when all that we wanted was a lizard, or an ibis. It is perhaps owing to this want of earnestness in study rather than to deficiency of perception, that the colouring of this artist is commonly untrue. Some time ago when he was painting Spanish subjects, his habit was to bring out his whites in relief from transparent bituminous browns, which though not exactly right in colour, were at any rate warm and agreeable; but of late his colour has become cold, waxy, and opaque, and in his deep shades he sometimes permits himself the use of a violent black which is altogether unjustifiable. A picture of Roslin Chapel, exhibited in 1844,[1] showed his defect in the recess to which the stairs descend, in an extravagant degree; and another, exhibited in the British Institution, instead of showing the exquisite crumbling and lichenous texture of the Roslin stone, was polished to as vapid smoothness as ever French historical picture. The general feebleness of the effect is increased by the insertion of the figures as violent pieces of

[1] [Roberts painted several pictures of Roslin Chapel in 1843 and 1844: see the list in his *Life* by Ballantine. One of them was No. 78 in the Royal Academy of 1843. Another is now in the Victoria and Albert (South Kensington) Museum (Sheepshanks collection, No. 174).]

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extreme ignorance, with Mr. Stanfield's boats; they never look weatherbeaten. There is something peculiarly precious in the rusty, dusty, tar-trickled, fishy, phosphorescent brown of an old boat;[1] and when this has just dipped under a wave, and rises to the sunshine, it is enough to drive Giorgione[2] to despair. I have never seen any effort at this by Stanfield; his boats always look newly painted and clean; witness especially the one before the ship, in the wreck picture above noticed: and there is some such absence of a right sense of colour in other portions of his subject; even his fishermen have always clean jackets and unsoiled caps, and his very rocks are lichenless. And, by-the-bye, this ought to be noted respecting modern painters in general, that they have not a proper sense of the value of Dirt;[3] cottage children never appear but in freshly got-up caps and aprons, and white-handed beggars excite compassion in unexceptionable rags. In reality, almost all the colours of things associated with human life derive something of their expression and value from the tones of impurity, and so enhance the value of the entirely pure tints of nature herself. Of Stanfield's rock and mountain drawing enough will be said hereafter.[4] His foliage is inferior; his architecture admirably drawn, but commonly wanting in colour. His picture of the Doge's Palace at Venice[5] was quite clay-cold and untrue. Of late he has shown a marvellous predilection for the realization, even to actually relieved texture, of old worm-eaten wood; we trust he will not allow such fancies to carry him too far.

The name I have last to mention is that of J. M. W.

[1] [*Cf.* the description of a fishing-boat in Ruskin's introduction to *The Harbours of England.*]

[2] [See below, pt. ii. sec. v. ch. i. § 19, p. 515.]

[3] [Cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. ix. § 6. In a letter to his father from the Italian Riviera (Oneglia, April 24, 1845), Ruskin writes:—

> "What fools our artists are, to be able to do nothing better with such noble studies lying on every step, than their contemptible vendemnias and tarantulas, with every gown clean and every coat whole. What a glorious thing is dirt! it tones colour down so, and yet our idiots of painters sketch in Italy as if they were studying models and dolls fresh washed in the Soho bazaar."]

[4] [For rocks, see below, sec. iv. ch. iv. § 8, p. 477; for mountains, sec. iv. ch. iii. § 25, p. 469.]

[5] [No. 281 in the Academy of 1843.]

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Turner.[1] I do not intend to speak of this artist at present in general terms, because my constant practice throughout this work is to say, when I speak of an artist at all, the very truth of what I believe and feel respecting him; and the truth of what I believe and feel respecting Turner would appear in this place, unsupported by any proof, mere rhapsody.* I shall therefore here confine myself to a rapid glance at the relations of his past and present works, and to some notice of what he has failed of accomplishing: the greater part of the subsequent chapters will be exclusively devoted to the examination of the new fields over which he has extended the range of landscape art.

§ 87. J. M. W. Turner. Force of national feeling in all great painters.

It is a fact more universally acknowledged than enforced or acted upon, that all great painters, of whatever school, have been great only in their rendering of what they had seen and felt from early childhood; and that the greatest among them have been the most frank in acknowledging this their inability to treat anything successfully but that with which they had been familiar. The Madonna of Raffaelle was born on the Urbino mountains, Ghirlandajo's is a Florentine, Bellini's a Venetian; there is not the slightest effort on the part of any one of these great men to paint her as a Jewess. It is not the place here to insist farther on a point so simple and so universally demonstrable. Expression, character, types of countenance, costume, colour, and accessories are, with all great painters whatsoever, those of their native land; and that frankly and entirely, without the slightest attempt at modification; and I assert fearlessly that it is impossible that it should ever be otherwise, and that no man ever painted, or ever will paint, well, anything but what he has early and long seen, early and long felt, and early and long loved. How far it is possible for the mind of one nation or generation to be

* Vide *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. Appendix 11.[2]

[1] [In his copy for revision Ruskin notes here: "Hence, all, to end of chapter."]
[2] [Note added in ed. 5.]

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healthily modified and taught by the work of another, I presume not to determine; but it depends upon whether the energy of the mind which receives the instruction be sufficient, while it takes out of what it feeds upon that which is universal and common to all nature, to resist all warping from national or temporary peculiarities. Nicolo Pisano got nothing but good, the modern French nothing but evil, from the study of the antique; but Nicolo Pisano had a God and a character. All artists who have attempted to assume, or in their weakness have been affected by, the national peculiarities of other times and countries, have instantly, whatever their original power, fallen to third-rate rank, or fallen altogether; and have invariably lost their birthright and blessing, lost their power over the human heart, lost all capability of teaching or benefiting others. Compare the hybrid classicalism[1] of Wilson with the rich English purity of Gainsborough; compare the recent exhibition of middle-age cartoons for the Houses of Parliament with the works of Hogarth;[2] compare the sickly modern German imitations of the great Italians with Albert Dürer and Holbein;[3] compare the vile classicality of Canova[4] and the modern Italians with Mino da Fiesole, Luca della Robbia, and Andrea del Verrocchio. The manner of Nicolo Poussin is said to be Greek —it may be so; this only I know, that it is heartless and profitless. The severity of the rule, however, extends not in full force to the nationality, but only to the visibility, of things; for it is very possible for an artist of powerful mind to throw himself well into the feeling of foreign nations of his own time; thus John Lewis has been eminently successful in his

[1] [In ed. 3 misprinted "classification"; see above, p. lii. *n.*]

[2] [In 1841 a Royal Commission was appointed to consider the question of "taking advantage of the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament for the purpose of promoting and encouraging the fine arts of the United Kingdom." The Commission decided to invite artists to enter into "a competition by cartoons." This took place in May 1843. The Commission then decided to hold a second competition, in which artists were invited "to exhibit specimens of fresco-painting." An exhibition of the works sent in took place in Westminster Hall in the summer of 1844. Next, a limited competition was held, six of the artists being invited to furnish cartoon-designs, specimens of fresco-painting, etc.]

[3] [For other references to the German school, see index volume; and *cf.* Introduction, above, p. xxxiii.]

[4] [*Cf.* *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iii. § 27.]

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seizing of Spanish character.[1] Yet it may be doubted if the seizure be such as Spaniards themselves would acknowledge; it is probably of the habits of the people more than their hearts; continued efforts of this kind, especially if their subjects be varied, assuredly end in failure. Lewis, who seemed so eminently penetrative in Spain, sent nothing from Italy but complexions and costumes, and I expect no good from his stay in Egypt. English artists are usually entirely ruined by residence in Italy; but for this there are collateral causes which it is not here the place to examine. Be this as it may, and whatever success may be attained in pictures of slight and unpretending aim, of genre, as they are called, in the rendering of foreign character, of this I am certain, that whatever is to be truly great and affecting must have on it the strong stamp of the native land. Not a law this, but a necessity, from the intense hold on their country of the affections of all truly great men. All classicality, all middle-aged patent-reviving, is utterly vain and absurd; if we are now to do anything great, good, awful, religious, it must be got out of our own little island, and out of these very times, railroads and all; if a British painter, I say this in earnest seriousness, cannot make historical characters out of the British House of Peers, he cannot paint history; and if he cannot make a Madonna of a British girl of the nineteenth century, he cannot paint one at all.[2]

The rule, of course, holds in landscape; yet so far less

[1] [For other references to Lewis, see above, p. 120 n. Lewis went to Egypt in 1843, and remained in the East eight years. Ruskin, as it turned out, intensely admired some of his Eastern work (see, *e.g.*, *Academy Notes*, 1856), but asked regretfully, "Are we never to get out of Egypt any more? . . . Is there nothing paintable in England . . .? (*Academy Notes*, 1859, *s.* No. 135).]

[2] [With this section *cf.* a similar passage in *Academy Notes*, 1875: "English girls by an English painter. Whether you call them Madonnas, or saints, or what not, it is the law of art-life—your own people, as they live, are the only ones you can understand," etc. *Cf.* also *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. vii. §§ 19, 20. James Smetham has recorded a characteristic conversation (1855) with Ruskin on this point:—

"Over the chimney-piece of the study (at Denmark Hill) was a copy he (Ruskin) had made from Tintoret, a Doge in his robes adoring the infant Saviour.

"J. S. According to your principle that men should represent all subjects in the costume of their own time, and we were to paint the subject, it

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authoritatively, that the material nature of all countries and times is in many points actually, and in all, in principle, the same; so that feelings educated in Cumberland may find their food in Switzerland,[1] and impressions first received amongst the rocks of Cornwall be recalled upon the precipices of Genoa. Add to this actual sameness, the power of every great mind to possess itself of the spirit of things once presented to it, and it is evident, that little limitation can be set to the landscape painter as to the choice of his field; and that the law of nationality will hold with him only so far as a certain joyfulness and completion will be by preference found in those parts of his subject which remind him of his own land. But if he attempt to impress on his landscapes any other spirit than that he has felt, and to make them landscapes of other times, it is all over with him, at least, in the degree in which such reflected moonshine takes the place of the genuine light of the present day.

§ 38. *Influence of this feeling on the choice of Landscape subject.*

The reader will at once perceive how much trouble this simple principle will save both the painter and the critic; it at once sets aside the whole school of common composition, and

would be well to substitute Lord John Russell for the Doge in a surtout, and place his hat on the pedestal here.

"J. R. (knowingly). I don't flinch from it; yes, if it would not look well, the times are wrong and their modes must be altered.

"J. S. It would be a great deal easier (it is a backward, lame action of the mind to fish up costume and forms we never saw), but I could not do it for laughing.

"J. R. Ha! but we *must* do it nevertheless."

(*Letters of James Smetham*, 1891, p. 56.) Smetham's point of view was that also of Millais: "The painter," he said, as explaining the difficulty of historical pictures in these days, "might laugh at his own work" (interview in the *Daily News*, Dec. 13, 1884). *Cf.* what Ruskin says, in his half-ironical way, about the reproduction of the Parthenon frieze on the Athenæum Club: its members "being therein Attic in no wise, but essentially barbarous; for a truly Attic mind would have induced them to portray *themselves*," etc. (*Fors Clavigera*, Letter xxiii.).]

[1] [Very true of Ruskin himself; see note on his recollections of the Lakes in Vol. II. p. xxx. So, again, in a letter from Vogogna (July 22, 1845), Ruskin writes to his father:—

"I wished for you sadly yesterday as I was driving from the Lake of Varese down to Laveno opposite Baveno. You cannot *conceive* anything so beautiful as the winding of the lakes, five or six seen at once among the mulberry woods and tufted crags. But as I said to myself at the time, it was only the more beautiful because it was more like Windermere, or rather, like many Windermeres."]

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exonerates us from the labour of minutely examining any landscape which has nymphs or philosophers in it.

It is hardly necessary for us to illustrate this principle by any reference to the works of early landscape painters, as I suppose it is universally acknowledged with respect to them; Titian being the most remarkable instance of the influence of the native air on a strong mind, and Claude of that of the classical poison on a weak one; but it is very necessary to keep it in mind in reviewing the works of our great modern landscape painter.

§ 30. Its peculiar manifestation in Turner.

I do not know in what district of England Turner first or longest studied, but the scenery whose influence I can trace most definitely throughout his works, varied as they are, is that of Yorkshire. Of all his drawings, I think, those of the Yorkshire series[1] have the most heart in them, the most affectionate, simple, unwearied, serious finishing of truth. There is in them little seeking after effect, but a strong love of place; little exhibition of the artist's own powers or peculiarities, but intense appreciation of the smallest local minutiæ. These drawings have unfortunately changed hands frequently, and have been abused and ill-treated by picture dealers and cleaners; the greater number of them are now mere wrecks. I name them not as instances, but as proofs, of the artist's study in this district, for the affection to which they owe their excellence must have been grounded long years before. It is to be traced, not only in these drawings of the places themselves, but in the peculiar love of the painter for rounded forms of hills; not but that he is right in this on general principles, for I doubt not, that with his peculiar feeling for beauty of line, his hills would have been rounded still, even if he had studied first among the peaks of Cadore; but rounded to the same extent, and with the same delight in their roundness, they would not have been. It is, I believe, to those broad wooded steeps and swells

[1] [See for the Yorkshire series Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, Fourth Group. They appeared partly in Dr. T. D. Whitaker's *History of Richmondshire* (1823), and partly in the "England and Wales." "Richmond" was in Ruskin's collection (see Plate 61 in vol. v. of *Modern Painters*).]

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of the Yorkshire downs that we in part owe the singular massiveness that prevails in Turner's mountain drawing, and gives it one of its chief elements of grandeur. Let the reader open the Liber Studiorum, and compare the painter's enjoyment of the lines in the Ben Arthur, with his comparative uncomfortableness among those of the aiguilles about the Mer de Glace. Great as he is, those peaks would have been touched very differently by a Savoyard as great as he.

I am in the habit of looking to the Yorkshire drawings, as indicating one of the culminating points in Turner's career. In these he attained the highest degree of what he had up to that time attempted, namely, finish and quantity of form united with expression of atmosphere, and light without colour. His early drawings are singularly instructive in this definiteness and simplicity of aim. No complicated or brilliant colour is ever thought of in them; they are little more than exquisite studies in light and shade, very green blues being used for the shadows, and golden browns for the lights. The difficulty and treachery of colour being thus avoided, the artist was able to bend his whole mind upon the drawing, and thus to attain such decision, delicacy, and completeness as have never in any wise been equalled, and as might serve him for a secure foundation in all after experiments. Of the quantity and precision of his details, the drawings made for Hakewill's Italy[1] are singular examples, as well as some of the drawings of Swiss scenery in the possession of F. H. Fawkes, Esq., of Farnley.[2]

[1] [*A Picturesque Tour of Italy, from Drawings made by J. Hakewill* (1820). Turner's drawings in that book were not made on the spot, but from sketches by Hakewill, who was an architect. Nos. 16–22 in Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner* belong to the Hakewill series.]

[2] [For Mr. Fawkes and his collection, see below, § 41 n. For "examples, as well as some of the drawings . . . of Farnley," eds. 3 and 4 read :—

> "examples. The most perfect gem in execution is a little bit on the Rhine, with reeds in the foreground, in the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq., of Tottenham; but the Yorkshire drawings seem to be, on the whole, the most noble representatives of his art at this period."

Mr. B. Godfrey Windus, a retired coachmaker, had a large collection of Turner's drawings, and also several of his oil-pictures. Ruskin "had the run of his rooms at any time," and this, he says, was "for me the means of writing *Modern Painters*. . . .

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About the time of their production, the artist seems to have felt that he had done either all that could be done, or all that was necessary, in that manner, and began to reach after something beyond it. The element of colour begins to mingle with his work, and in the first efforts to reconcile his intense feeling for it with his careful form, several anomalies begin to be visible, and some unfortunate or uninteresting works necessarily belong to the period. The England drawings,[1] which are very characteristic of it, are exceedingly unequal,—some, as the Oakhampton, Kilgarren, Alnwick, and Llanthony, being among his finest works; others, as the Windsor from Eton, the Eton College, and the Bedford, showing coarseness and conventionality.

§ 40. *The domestic subjects of the Liber Studiorum.*

I do not know at what time the painter first went abroad,[2] but some of the Swiss drawings above named were made in 1804 or 1806; and among the earliest of the series of the Liber Studiorum (dates 1808, 1809), occur the magnificent Mont St. Gothard, and Little Devil's Bridge. Now it is remarkable that after his acquaintance with this scenery, so congenial in almost all respects with the energy of his mind, and supplying him with

Nobody, in all England, at that time,—and Turner was already sixty,—*cared*, in the true sense of the word, for Turner, but the retired coachmaker of Tottenham, and I" (*Præterita*, ii. ch. i. § 11; cf. *Deucalion*, Appendix, *n.*) Windus was also one of the earliest buyers of the Pre-Raphaelites' work (see *Letters of D. G. Rossetti to William Allingham*, 1897, p. 91). Among Turner's oil-pictures in the Windus collection were "Glaucus and Scylla" (R.A. 1841), "The Dawn of Christianity" (R.A. 1841), "The Approach to Venice" (R.A. 1844), "Venice: going to the Ball" (R.A. 1846), and "Venice: returning from the Ball" (R.A. 1846). Among the drawings, "Tynemouth," "A Ruined Abbey," "The West Fout of Wells Cathedral," "The Bridge of Sighs" (Byron vignette), "The Lake of Zug," "Bellinzona," "Cologne," "Devonport" and "Salisbury" (both afterwards in the Ruskin collection), and "Nemi" and "Oberwesel." Mr. Windus was liberal in allowing strangers to visit his collection. One of the reviewers of the first volume of *Modern Painters* was conscientious enough to prepare himself for the task by studying Mr. Windus' Turners, "and we are glad to record our sense of the patient kindness with which he accompanied a stranger during the inspection of upwards of two hundred of Turner's finest productions" (*Church of England Quarterly*, Jan. 1844).]

[1] [*Picturesque Views in England and Wales*, from drawings by J. M. W. Turner, Esq., R.A., engraved under the superintendence of Mr. Charles Heath. With descriptive and historical illustrations by H. E. Lloyd: 2 vols., 1838. The engravings had previously been published in twenty-four numbers, 1827–1838.]

[2] [Probably 1802; see Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, No. 7, and *Catalogue of the Drawings and Sketches by Turner in the National Gallery*, Group viii., for remarks on Turner's first Continental tour.]

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materials of which in these two subjects, and in the Chartreuse, and several others afterwards, he showed both his entire appreciation and command, the proportion of English to foreign subjects should in the rest of the work be more than two to one; and that those English subjects should be, many of them, of a kind peculiarly simple, and of every-day occurrence; such as the Pembury Mill, the Farm-Yard composition with the white horse, that with the cocks and pigs, Hedging and Ditching, Watercress Gatherers (scene at Twickenham), and the beautiful and solemn rustic subject called "A Watermill:" and that the architectural subjects, instead of being taken, as might have been expected of an artist so fond of treating effects of extended space, from some of the enormous continental masses, are almost exclusively British; Rivaulx, Holy Island, Dumblain, Dunstanborough, Chepstow, St. Katherine's, Greenwich Hospital, an English Parish Church, a Saxon ruin, and an exquisite reminiscence of the English lowland castle in the pastoral with the brook, wooden bridge, and wild duck; to all of which we have nothing foreign to oppose but three slight, ill-considered, and unsatisfactory subjects, from Basle, Lauffenbourg, and Thun: and, farther, not only is the preponderance of subject British, but of affection also; for it is strange with what fulness and completion the home subjects are treated in comparison with the greater part of the foreign ones. Compare the figures and sheep in the Hedging and Ditching, and the East Gate, Winchelsea, together with the near leafage, with the puzzled foreground and inappropriate figures of the Lake of Thun; or the cattle and road of the St. Catherine's Hill, with the foreground of the Bonneville; or the exquisite figure with the sheaf of corn in the Watermill, with the vintagers of the Grenoble subject.

In his foliage the same predilections are remarkable. Reminiscences of English willows by the brooks, and English forest glades, mingle even with the heroic foliage of the Æsacus and Hesperie, and the Cephalus; into the pine, whether of Switzerland or the glorious Stone, he cannot enter,

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or enters at his peril, like Ariel.[1] Those of the Valley of Chamounix are fine masses, better pines than other people's, but not a bit like pines for all that; he feels his weakness, and tears them off the distant mountains with the mercilessness of an avalanche. The Stone pines of the two Italian compositions are fine in their arrangement, but they are very pitiful pines; the glory of the Alpine rose he never touches; he mounches chestnuts with no relish; never has learned to like olives; and, in the foreground of the Grenoble Alps, is, like many other great men, overthrown by the vine.[2]

I adduce these evidences of Turner's nationality (and innumerable others might be given if need were), not as proofs of weakness, but of power; not so much as testifying want of perception in foreign lands, as strong hold on his own; for I am sure that no artist who has not this hold upon his own will ever get good out of any other. Keeping this principle in mind, it is instructive to observe the depth and solemnity which Turner's feeling acquired from the scenery of the continent, the keen appreciation up to a certain point of all that is locally characteristic, and the ready seizure for future use of all valuable material.

§ 41. Turner's painting of French and Swiss landscape. The latter deficient.

Of all foreign countries he has most entirely entered into the spirit of France; partly because here he found more fellowship of scene with his own England; partly because an amount of thought which will miss of Italy or Switzerland will fathom France; partly because there is in the French foliage and forms of ground much that is especially congenial with his own peculiar choice of form. To what cause it is owing

[1] [*The Tempest*, Act i. Sc. ii. line 277. For other remarks on Turner's painting of pines, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vi. ch. ix. § 7; *Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House*, Nos. 505, 516; *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, 26 R.; *Mornings in Florence*, § 108. The "Valley of Chamounix" referred to in the text is the plate in the Liber Studiorum, not the one in the Farnley collection (see below, § 41 *n*).]

[2] [The original drawings for most of the plates mentioned above are in the National Gallery. Rivaulx is No. 483; Holy Island, No. 481; Dumblane, No. 497; Dunstanborough, No. 485; Chepstow, No. 494; St. Catherine's Hill, Guildford, No. 491; Greenwich Hospital, No. 493; "An English Parish Church" is the "Interior of a Church" in *Liber*, No. 14; "An English Lowland Castle," etc., is the "Pastoral," No. 467 in the National Gallery; Basle, No. 521; Lauffenburg, No. 473; Thun,

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I cannot tell, nor is it generally allowed or felt; but of the fact I am certain, that for grace of stem and perfection of form in their transparent foliage, the French trees are altogether unmatched; and their modes of grouping and massing are so perfectly and constantly beautiful, that I think, of all countries for educating an artist to the perception of grace, France bears the bell; and that not romantic nor mountainous France, not the Vosges, nor Auvergne, nor Provence, but lowland France, Picardy and Normandy, the valleys of the Loire and Seine, and even the district, so thoughtlessly and mindlessly abused by English travellers as uninteresting, traversed between Calais and Dijon;[1] of which there is not a single valley but is full of the most lovely pictures, nor a mile from which the artist may not receive instruction; the district immediately about Sens being perhaps the most valuable, from the grandeur of its lines of poplars, and the unimaginable finish and beauty of the tree forms in the two great avenues without the walls. Of this kind of beauty Turner was the first to take cognizance, and he still remains the only, but in himself the sufficient, painter of French landscape. One of the most beautiful examples is the drawing of trees engraved for the Keepsake, now in the possession of

Nos. 474, 475; Hedging and Ditching, No. 508; East Gate, Winchelsea, No. 488; Bonneville, No. 478; Watermill, No. 505; Alps from Grenoble, No. 479; Cephalus and Procris, No. 465. The "Valley of Chamounix" is "Source of the Arveron," No. 879. The Æsacus and Hesperie is not in the National Gallery; it, and the Cephalus, are described and reproduced in *Lectures on Landscape*.]

[1] [Ruskin had now made this journey repeatedly, by posting stages and stopping on the road to sketch. With the scenery around Sens in particular he had been much impressed on his tour of 1845. In a letter from Sens (April 7) he writes to his father:—

> "Such an exquisite morning as I had to leave Paris. Notre Dame and the Pont Neuf misty in the eastern light, and the Seine blazing beside the road all the way to Charenton till it nearly blinded me. I started from Meurice's at 7 precisely and got in here at 10 minutes before 5. Ordered dinner at ¼ to 7 and ran out and made a sketch in the market-place, and then down to the river side (Yonne) to see the sun set. Such an avenue! Every tree a new perfection! Turners, and better than Turner, at every step; I never saw anything so wonderful, so finished, so refined in vegetable form. It is a lovely place this: we came upon it in the afternoon light, after a thunderstorm had just fallen on *it*, not on us, and brought out all the colours into the subject, and the sweet spring smells out of the ground. The rows of poplars beside the Yonne, and the slopes covered with vineyards opposite, are both exquisite in their way."]

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J.M.W. Turner R.A. Allen & Co. Sc.

The Valley of Chamouni.

From the Drawing in possession of F.H. Fawkes, Esquire

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B. G. Windus, Esq.; the drawings made to illustrate the scenery of the Rivers of France supply instances of the most varied character.[1]

The artist appears, until very lately, rather to have taken from Switzerland thoughts and general conceptions of size and of grand form and effect to be used in his after compositions, than to have attempted the seizing of its local character. This was beforehand to be expected from the utter physical impossibility of rendering certain effects of Swiss scenery, and the monotony and unmanageableness of others. Of the drawings above alluded to in the possession of F. H. Fawkes, Esq., I shall give account hereafter; they are not altogether successful, but the manner of their deficiency cannot be described in my present space.[2] The Hannibal passing the Alps,[3] in its present state, exhibits nothing but a heavy shower, and a crowd of people getting wet; another picture in the artist's gallery, of a Bergfall,[4] is most masterly and interesting, but more daring than agreeable. The "Snow-storm, avalanche, and inundation,"[5] is one of his mightiest works, but the amount of mountain drawing in it is less than of cloud and effect;

[1] [The drawing of trees is "The Palace of La Belle Gabrielle," engraved in the *Keepsake* for 1834 (for another reference to it, see below, p. 587); the drawings for the "Rivers of France" are now mostly in public collections—either (by Turner's bequest) in the National Gallery, or (by Ruskin's gift) in the University Galleries at Oxford and the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge.]

[2] [Of Mr. Fawkes and Farnley Hall in relation to Turner and to Ruskin, an account is given in a later volume of this edition. Of the Farnley collection of Turners, as it existed in the time of Mr. F. H. Hawkes, Turner's friend, who died in 1820, a list is given in Thornbury's *Life*, 1877 ed., pp. 589–592. The greater part of the collection was exhibited in 1902 in London. The Swiss drawings were exhibited in 1815, but many of them were painted ten or more years earlier, and the first sketches for them were made in 1802 (see C. F. Bell's *Exhibited Works of Turner*, 1901, p. 19, and Ruskin's *Catalogue of the Sketches and Drawings by Turner in Marlborough House*, 1857–58, *s.* No. 72, now No. 554). For "Of the drawings above alluded to . . . my present space," eds. 3 and 4 read, "The Valley of Chamounix, in the collection of Walter Fawkes, Esq., I have never seen; it has a high reputation." And lower down, for "Berg," the same eds. read, "land."

The drawing of Chamouni is here reproduced; with it compare Ruskin's drawing (facing p. 240), and see Introduction, above, p. liv. Ruskin's promise to give account hereafter of the Farnley drawings was partially fulfilled in *Pre-Raphaelitism* (1851), where a few of them are described.]

[3] [No. 490 in the National Gallery, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1812.]

[4] [No. 489 in the National Gallery, "Cottage destroyed by an Avalanche"; for a description of it, see *Notes on the Turner Gallery*.]

[5] [Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1837: see below, p. 462.]

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the subjects in the Liber Studiorum are on the whole the most intensely felt, and next to them the vignettes to Rogers's Poems, and Italy. Of some recent drawings of Swiss subjects I shall speak presently.[1]

§ 42. His rendering of Italian character still less successful. His large compositions, how failing.

The effect of Italy upon his mind is very puzzling.[2] On the one hand it gave him the solemnity and power which are manifested in the historical compositions of the Liber Studiorum, more especially the Rizpah, the Cephalus, the scene from the Fairy Queen,[3] and the Æsacus and Hesperie; on the other, he seems never to have entered thoroughly into the spirit of Italy, and the materials he obtained there were afterwards but awkwardly introduced in his large compositions.

Of these there are very few at all worthy of him; none but the Liber Studiorum subjects are thoroughly great, and these are great because there is in them the seriousness, without the materials, of other countries and times. There is nothing particularly indicative of Palestine in the Barley Harvest of the Rizpah, nor in those round and awful trees; only the solemnity of the south in the lifting of the near burning moon. The rocks of the Jason may be seen in any quarry of Warwickshire sandstone. Jason himself has not a bit of Greek about him; he is a simple warrior of no period in particular, nay, I think there is something of the nineteenth century about his legs. When local character of this classical kind is attempted, the painter is visibly cramped; awkward resemblances to Claude testify the want of his usual forceful originality: in the Tenth Plague of Egypt, he makes us think of Belzoni[4] rather than of Moses; the Fifth is a total failure; the pyramids look like brick-kilns, and the fire running along the ground like the burning of manure. The realization of

[1] [See below, § 46, p. 250.]

[2] [Turner first visited Italy in 1819.]

[3] [No. 884 of the National Gallery drawings. Rizpah is No. 864; Jason, No. 461; the Tenth Plague, No. 469; the Fifth, No. 865. The "Realization of the Tenth Plague" is No. 470 of the oil-pictures; it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1802.]

[4] [Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823), a "strong man" performer at Astley's and afterwards explorer in Egypt.]

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J. Hinshelwood — Allen & Co. Sc.

The Valley of Chamouni.

From the water-colour drawing in possession of Pritchard Gordon, Esquire.

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the Tenth Plague, now in his gallery, is finer than the study, but still uninteresting; and of the large compositions which have much of Italy in them, the greater part are overwhelmed with quantity, and deficient in emotion. The Crossing the Brook[1] is one of the best of these hybrid pictures; incomparable in its tree drawing, it yet leaves us doubtful where we are to look and what we are to feel; it is northern in its colour, southern in its foliage, Italy in its details, and England in its sensations, without the grandeur of the one or the cheerfulness of the other.

The two Carthages[2] are mere rationalizations of Claude; one of them excessively bad in colour, the other a grand thought, and yet one of the kind which does no one any good, because everything in it is reciprocally sacrificed; the foliage is sacrificed to the architecture, the architecture to the water, the water is neither sea, nor river, nor lake, nor brook, nor canal, and savours of Regent's Park; the foreground is uncomfortable ground—let on building leases. So, the Caligula's Bridge, Temple of Jupiter, Departure of Regulus, Ancient Italy, Cicero's Villa, and such others, come they from whose hand they may, I class under the general head of "nonsense pictures."[3] There never can be any wholesome feeling developed in these preposterous accumulations, and where the artist's feeling fails, his art follows; so that the worst possible examples of Turner's colour are found in pictures of this

[1] [No. 497 in the National Gallery, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1815. A study for the tree is No. 401 of the National Gallery drawings. For other references to the picture, see below, sec. ii. ch. ii. § 18, sec. vi. ch. i. § 15, pp. 297, 587; and *Pre-Raphaelitism*, § 33.]

[2] [The two companion pictures, "The Rise of the Carthaginian Empire" or "Dido building Carthage" (exhibited 1815, No. 498 in the National Gallery), and the "Decline of the Carthaginian Empire" (exhibited 1817, No. 499 in the National Gallery collection, now exhibited at Manchester). For the "epic thought" in the earlier picture, see above, p. 113; for the later picture, see next note.]

[3] [Cf. *Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House*, 1856, note on Nos. 499 and on "Characteristics of Turner's Second Period," where Ruskin cites passages from §§ 42, 43 here to show the place he had always given to pictures of the class above described. Worst of the class, he there says, is "The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire." "Caligula's Palace and Bridge" (1831) is No. 512 in the National Gallery; two pictures of the "Temple of Jupiter, Ægina" were exhibited in 1816, one of them now in the Whitworth Institute, Manchester; "Regulus leaving Rome" (1837) is No. 519 in the National Gallery collection, now exhibited at Dublin; "Ancient Italy" (1838) was in the collection of Munro of Novar, and was latterly in possession of Messrs. Sedelmeyer

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class. In one or two instances he has broken through the conventional rules, and then is always fine, as in the Hero and Leander; but in general the picture rises in value as it approaches to a view, as the Fountain of Fallacy, a piece of rich Northern Italy, with some fairy waterworks;[1] this picture was unrivalled in colour once, but is now a mere wreck. So also the Rape of Proserpine, though it is singular that in his Academy pictures even his simplicity fails of reaching ideality: in his picture of Proserpine the nature is not the grand nature of all time, it is indubitably modern,* and we are perfectly electrified at anybody's being carried away in the corner except by people with spiky hats and carabines. This is traceable to several causes; partly to the want of any grand specific form, partly to the too evident middle-age character of the ruins crowning the hills, and to a multiplicity of minor causes which we cannot at present enter into.

Neither in his actual views of Italy has Turner ever caught her true spirit, except in the little vignettes to Rogers's poems. The Villa of Galileo, the nameless composition with stone pines, the several villa moonlights, and the convent

* This passage seems at variance with what has been said of the necessity of painting present times and objects. It is not so. A great painter makes out of that which he finds before him something which is independent of *all* time. He can only do this out of the materials ready to his hand, but that which he builds has the dignity of dateless age. A little painter is annihilated by an anachronism, and is conventionally antique, and involuntarily modern.

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of Paris; "Cicero at his Villa" (1839), formerly in the Munro and Powerscourt collections, was afterwards in that of Mr. Edward Hermon; "Hero and Leander" (1837) is No. 521 in the National Gallery collection, now exhibited at Glasgow; for other references to it, see below, sec. ii. ch. iii. § 5, sec. iii. ch. iii. § 26, sec. v. ch. iii. § 30, sec. vi. ch. ii. § 1, pp. 306, 390, 562, 607; and *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. viii. ch. iv. § 18 *n*. "Plato carrying off Proserpine" (1839) is in the collection of Mr. Edward Chapman.]

[1] [The "Fountain of Fallacy" was exhibited at the British Institution in 1839. Its subsequent history is unknown, unless the picture was identical with "The Fountain of Indolence" exhibited at the Academy in 1834, and now in the collection of Mr. George Vanderbilt (see for this conjecture C. F. Bell's *Exhibited Works of Turner*, 1901, p. 138). Ruskin had seen the picture in 1844 at a collection in Portland Place. He writes in his diary:—

> *Feb.* 26.— . . . Called on Blakes in Portland Place, and saw the "Fountain of Fallacy," which I was bitterly vexed about—the sky entirely gone—but a nobler picture than even I imagined.

For a reference to the "Fountain of Indolence," see *Præterita*, i. ch. xii. § 242.]

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compositions in the Voyage of Columbus, are altogether exquisite;[1] but this is owing chiefly to their simplicity, and perhaps in some measure to their smallness of size. None of his large pictures at all equal them; the Bay of Baiae is encumbered with material, it contains ten times as much as is necessary to a good picture,[2] and yet is so crude in colour as to look unfinished. The Palestrina is full of raw white, and has a look of Hampton Court about its long avenue; the Modern Italy is purely English in its near foliage; it is composed from Tivoli material, enriched and arranged most dexterously, but it has the look of a rich arrangement, and not the virtue of the real thing. The early Tivoli, a large drawing taken from below the falls, was as little true, and still less fortunate, the trees there being altogether affected and artificial. The Florence, engraved in the Keepsake, is a glorious drawing, as far as regards the passage with the bridge and sunlight on the Arno, the cascine foliage, and distant plain, and the towers of the fortress on the left; but the details of the duomo and the city are entirely missed, and with them the majesty of the whole scene. The vines and melons of the foreground are disorderly, and its cypresses conventional; in fact, I recollect no instance of Turner's drawing a cypress except in general terms.

§ 43. *His views of Italy destroyed by brilliancy and redundant quantity.*

[1] [The drawings for these are in the National Gallery. "Galileo's Villa" (for the *Italy*) is No. 221. The "nameless composition with stone pines" (at p. 168 of the *Italy*) is No. 202; *cf.* below, sec. ii. ch. iii. § 5, p. 307. The "villa moonlights" are No. 217 (Verona, at p. 135 of the *Italy*) and No. 223 (Padua, at p. 223). The "convent compositions" (illustrating the *Poems*) are Nos. 246 and 250.]

[2] [No. 505 in the National Gallery, exhibited 1823. Ruskin enlarges on the overfulness of the picture in his discussion of it in the *Notes on the Turner Gallery*. The "Palestrina" (1830), formerly in the Bicknell collection, is now in that of Mrs. Williams. Ruskin's first impressions of the "Palestrina" were in some respects more favourable, as appears from the following note in his diary:—

> *March* 27, 1844.— . . . Got a kind message from Turner that I might see the "Palestrina." Went in to-day on purpose; much delighted, but it is very crude in colour compared to my "Slaver"; glorious as a composition. Mr. Bicknell has bought it, and five others, which put me quite beside myself with joy yesterday.

The "Modern Italy" (1838), once in the Munro (of Novar) collection, is now in the Corporation Galleries, Glasgow. The "Early Tivoli" drawing was in the collection of Mr. Allnutt. For notices of other Tivoli drawings, see Ruskin's *Catalogue of the Turner Drawings and Sketches in the National Gallery* (1881). The "Florence" was engraved by E. Goodall in the *Keepsake* for 1828.]

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The chief reason of these failures I imagine to be the effort of the artist to put joyousness and brilliancy of effect upon scenes eminently pensive, to substitute radiance for serenity of light, and to force the freedom and breadth of line which he learned to love on English downs and Highland moors, out of a country dotted by campaniles and square convents, bristled with cypresses, partitioned by walls, and gone up and down by steps.

In one of the cities of Italy he had no such difficulties to encounter. At Venice he found freedom of space, brilliancy of light, variety of colour, massive simplicity of general form; and to Venice we owe many of the motives in which his highest powers of colour have been displayed, after that change in his system of which we must now take note.

§ 44. *Changes introduced by him in the received system of art.*

Among the earlier *paintings* of Turner, the culminating period, marked by the Yorkshire series in his *drawings*, is distinguished by great solemnity and simplicity of subject, prevalent gloom in chiaroscuro, and brown in the hue, the drawing manly but careful, the minutiæ sometimes exquisitely delicate. All the finest works of this period are, I believe, without exception, views, or quiet single thoughts. The Calder Bridge, belonging to E. Bicknell, Esq., is a most pure and beautiful example.[1] The Ivy Bridge I imagine to be later, but its rock foreground is altogether unrivalled, and remarkable for its delicacy of detail; a butterfly is seen settled on one of the large brown stones in the midst of the torrent, a bird is about to seize it, while its companion, crimson-winged, flits idly on

[1] [Mr. Bicknell was a neighbour of Ruskin at Herne Hill, and had a collection of ten pictures and fourteen drawings by Turner. For a list of its contents, see Thornbury's *Life of Turner*, ed. 1877, p. 599. Among the pictures were "Port Ruysdael" and "Venice, Campo Santo"; for these, see below, sec. v. ch. iii. § 37, p. 568, and *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vii. ch. ii. § 15 *n*. Among the drawings were two of the late Swiss series (the "Blue Righi" and Lucerne Lake); for these, see Epilogue to Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*. The "Calder Bridge, Cumberland" (not exhibited) was painted about 1810; it is now in the possession of Mrs. Ashton. The "Ivy Bridge" (also in Mr. Bicknell's collection, and likewise not exhibited) was painted about 1812; it is now in the collection of Mr. Pandeli Ralli. A sketch from nature for it is in the National Gallery (No. 407), where also there is a drawing of the same subject (No. 556, and study in frame, No. 407); for these, see *Catalogue of the Sketches and Drawings by Turner in Marlborough House*, 1857–58, under No. 43.]

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the surface of one of the pools of the stream, within half an inch of the surface of the water, thus telling us its extreme stillness. Two paintings of Bonneville,[1] in Savoy, one in the possession of Abel Allnutt, Esq., the other, and I think the finer, in a collection at Birmingham, show more variety of colour than is usual with him at the period, and are in every respect magnificent examples.* Pictures of this class are of peculiar value, for the larger compositions of the same period are all poor in colour, and most of them much damaged; but the smaller works have been far finer originally, and their colour seems secure. There is nothing in the range of landscape art equal to them in their way, but the full character and capacity of the painter are not in them. Grand as they are in their sobriety, they still leave much to be desired; there is great heaviness in their shadows, the material is never thoroughly vanquished (though this partly for a very noble reason, that the painter is always thinking of and referring to nature, and indulges in no artistical conventionalities), and sometimes the handling appears feeble. In warmth, lightness, and transparency, they have no chance against Gainsborough; in clear skies and air tone they are alike unfortunate when they provoke comparison with Claude; and in force and solemnity they can in no wise stand with the landscape of the Venetians.

The painter evidently felt that he had farther powers, and pressed forward into the field where alone they could be brought into play. It was impossible for him, with all his keen and long disciplined perceptions, not to feel that the real

* The worst picture I ever saw of this period, "The Trosachs" [*sic*], has been for some time exhibited at Mr. Grundy's in Regent Street; and it has been much praised by the public press, on the ground, I suppose, that it exhibits so little of Turner's power or manner as to be hardly recognizable for one of his works.[2]

[1] [Bonneville was a favourite subject of Turner's. He painted several pictures of it, and exhibited three (see C. F. Bell's *Exhibited Works of Turner*, Nos. 100 (1803), 104 (1803), and 124 (1812). For drawings, see National Gallery, Nos. 323, 478, and 854; and Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, No. 10.]

[2] [Note added in ed. 5. "The Trossachs," formerly in the Munro collection, is now in that of Mr. Humphrey Roberts; it was painted about 1810.]

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colour of nature had never been attempted by any school; and that though conventional representations had been given by the Venetians of sunlight and twilight by invariably rendering the whites golden and the blues green, yet of the actual, joyous, pure, roseate hues of the external world no record had ever been given. He saw also that the finish and specific grandeur of nature had been given, but her fulness, space, and mystery never; and he saw that the great landscape painters had always sunk the lower middle tints of nature in extreme shade, bringing the entire melody of colour as many degrees down as their possible light was inferior to nature's; and that in so doing a gloomy principle had influenced them even in their choice of subject.

For the conventional colour he substituted a pure straightforward rendering of fact, as far as was in his power; and that not of such fact as had been before even suggested, but of all that is *most* brilliant, beautiful, and inimitable; he went to the cataract for its iris, to the conflagration for its flames, asked of the sea its intensest azure, of the sky its clearest gold. For the limited space and defined forms of elder landscape he substituted the quantity and the mystery of the vastest scenes of earth; and for the subdued chiaroscuro he substituted first a balanced diminution of opposition throughout the scale, and afterwards, in one or two instances, attempted the reverse of the old principle, taking the lowest portion of the scale truly, and merging the upper part in high light.[1]

§ 45. Difficulties of his later manner. Resultant deficiencies.

Innovations so daring and so various could not be introduced without corresponding peril: the difficulties that lay in his way were more than any human intellect could altogether surmount. In his time there has been no one system of colour generally approved; every artist has his own method and his own vehicle; how to do what Gainsborough did, we know not; much less what Titian; to invent a new system of colour can

[1] [The account of Turner's successive periods, given in this chapter, should be compared, in the case of his paintings, with Ruskin's *Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House* (1856); in the case of his drawings, with Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner* (1878).]

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hardly be expected of those who cannot recover the old. To obtain perfectly satisfactory results in colour under the new conditions introduced by Turner would at least have required the exertion of all his energies in that sole direction. But colour has always been only his second object. The effects of space and form, in which he delights, often require the employment of means and method totally at variance with those necessary for the obtaining of pure colour. It is physically impossible, for instance, rightly to draw certain forms of the upper clouds with the brush; nothing will do it but the pallet knife with loaded white after the blue ground is prepared. Now it is impossible that a cloud so drawn, however glazed afterwards, should have the virtue of a thin warm tint of Titian's, showing the canvas throughout. So it happens continually. Add to these difficulties, those of the peculiar subjects attempted, and to these again, all that belong to the altered system of chiaroscuro, and it is evident that we must not be surprised at finding many deficiencies or faults in such works, especially in the earlier of them, nor even suffer ourselves to be withdrawn by the pursuit of what seems censurable from our devotion to what is mighty.

Notwithstanding, in some chosen examples of pictures of this kind (I will name three: Juliet and her Nurse; the Old Téméraire; and the Slave Ship[1]), I do not admit that there are at the time of their first appearing on the walls of the Royal Academy, any demonstrably avoidable faults; I do not deny that there may be, nay, that it is likely there are: but there is no living artist in Europe whose judgment might safely be taken on the subject, or who could without arrogance affirm of any part of such a picture, that it was *wrong*. I am perfectly willing to allow, that the lemon yellow is not properly representative of the yellow of the sky, that the loading of the

[1] [For "Juliet and her Nurse" (1836), see below, pp. 636–640. The "Old Téméraire" (1839) is No. 524 in the National Gallery; see below, § 46 *n.*; sec. ii. ch. i. § 21; *Harbours of England*, § 32; and *Notes on the Turner Gallery*. The "Slave Ship" (1840) is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (U.S.A.); it was formerly in Ruskin's collection (see Introduction, above, p. lv.). Lower down, sec. v. ch. iii. § 39, Ruskin describes it and characterizes it as "the noblest sea ever painted by man;" for other references to it, see note on p. 571.]

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colour is in many places disagreeable, that many of the details are drawn with a kind of imperfection different from what they would have in nature, and that many of the parts fail of imitation, especially to an uneducated eye. But no living authority is of weight enough to prove that the virtues of the picture could have been obtained at a less sacrifice, or that they are not worth the sacrifice: and though it is perfectly possible that such may be the case, and that what Turner has done may hereafter in some respects be done better, I believe myself that these works are at the time of their first appearing as perfect as those of Phidias or Leonardo; that is to say, incapable, in their way, of any improvement conceivable by human mind.

Also, it is only by comparison with such that we are authorized to affirm definite faults in any of his others, for we should have been bound to speak, at least for the present, with the same modesty respecting even his worst pictures of this class, had not his more noble efforts given us canons of criticism.

But, as was beforehand to be expected from the difficulties he grappled with, Turner is exceedingly unequal; he appears always as a champion in the thick of fight, sometimes with his foot on his enemies' necks, sometimes staggered or struck to his knee; once or twice altogether down. He has failed most frequently, as before noticed, in elaborate compositions, from redundant quantity;[1] sometimes, like most other men, from over-care, as very signally in a large and most laboured drawing of Bamborough; sometimes, unaccountably, his eye for colour seeming to fail him for a time, as in a large painting of Rome from the Forum, and in the Cicero's Villa, and Building of Carthage;[2] and sometimes, I am sorry to say, criminally, from taking licenses which he must know to be illegitimate, or indulging in conventionalities which he does not require.

[1] [See above, § 43.]

[2] [The "Bamborough" may be the drawing sold from the collection of Mr. J. Heugh in 1860 (see Thornbury, p. 608). The "Rome" may be the picture in the National Gallery collection, No. 504, now exhibited at Chester. For "Cicero at his Villa," see above, p. 242 *n.* For the "Building of Carthage" (No. 498 in the National Gallery), see above, p. 241 *n.*]

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On such instances I shall not insist, for the finding fault with Turner is not, I think, either decorous in myself or likely to be beneficial to the reader.* The greater number of failures took place in the period of transition, when the artist was feeling for the new qualities, and endeavouring to reconcile them with more careful elaboration of form than was properly consistent with them. Gradually his hand became more free, his perception and grasp of the new truths more certain, and his

§ 46. *Reflection on his very recent works.*

* One point, however, it is incumbent upon me to notice, being no question of art but of material. The reader will have observed that I strictly limited the perfection of Turner's works to the time of their first appearing on the walls of the Royal Academy. It bitterly grieves me to have to do this, but the fact is indeed so. No *picture* of Turner's is seen in perfection a month after it is painted. The Walhalla cracked before it had been eight days in the Academy rooms; the vermilions frequently lose lustre long before the Exhibition is over; and when all the colours begin to get hard a year or two after the picture is painted, a painful deadness and opacity come over them, the whites especially becoming lifeless, and many of the warmer passages settling into a hard valueless brown, even if the paint remains perfectly firm, which is far from being always the case. I believe that in some measure these results are unavoidable, the colours being so peculiarly blended and mingled in Turner's present manner, as almost to necessitate their irregular drying; but that they are not necessary to the extent in which they sometimes take place, is proved by the comparative safety of some even of the more brilliant works. Thus the Old Téméraire is nearly safe in colour, and quite firm; while the Juliet and her Nurse is now the ghost of what it was; the Slaver shows no cracks, though it is chilled in some of the darker passages, while the Walhalla and several of the recent Venices cracked in the Royal Academy. It is true that the damage makes no farther progress after the first year or two, and that even in its altered state the picture is always valuable and records its intention; but how are we enough to regret that so great a painter should not leave a single work by which in succeeding ages he might be entirely estimated? The fact of his using means so imperfect, together with that of his utter neglect of the pictures in his own gallery, are a phenomenon in human mind which appears to me utterly inexplicable; and both are without excuse. If the effects he desires cannot be to their full extent produced except by these treacherous means, one picture only should be painted each year as an exhibition of immediate power, and the rest should be carried out, whatever the expense of labour and time, in safe materials, even at the risk of some deterioration of immediate effect. That which is greatest in him is entirely independent of means; much of what he now accomplishes illegitimately might without doubt be attained in securer modes—what cannot, should without hesitation be abandoned. Fortunately the drawings appear subject to no such deterioration. Many of them are now almost destroyed, but this has been I think always through ill treatment, or has been the case only with very early works. I have myself

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choice of subject more adapted to the exhibition of them.[1] In the year 1842, he made some drawings from recent sketches in Switzerland, peculiarly fine in colour; and among the Academy pictures of that period, examples of the same power were not wanting, more especially in the smaller Venetian subjects. The Sun of Venice; the San Benedetto, looking towards Fusina; and a view of Murano with the cemetery, were all faultless: another of Venice, seen from near Fusina, with sunlight and moonlight mixed (1844), was, I think, when I first saw it, the most perfectly *beautiful* piece of colour of all that I have seen produced by human hands, by any means, or at any period. Of the Exhibition of 1845, I have only seen a small Venice (still, I believe, in the artist's possession), and the

known no instance of a drawing properly protected, and not rashly exposed to light, suffering the slightest change. The great foes of Turner, as of all other great colourists especially, are the sun, the picture cleaner, and the mounter.[2]

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[1] [Here eds. 3 and 4 read, at greater length :—

"... exhibition of them, but his powers did not attain their highest results till towards the year 1840, about which period they did so suddenly, and with a vigour and concentration which rendered his pictures at that time almost incomparable with those which had preceded them. The drawings of Nemi, and Oberwesel, in the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq., were among the first evidences of this sudden advance; only the foliage in both these is inferior; and it is remarkable that in this phase of his art, Turner has drawn little foliage, and that little badly—the great characteristic of it being its power, beauty, and majesty of colour, and its abandonment of all littleness and division of thought to a single impression. In the year 1842 he made some drawings from recent sketches in Switzerland; these, with some produced in the following years, all of Swiss subjects, I consider to be, on the whole, the most characteristic and perfect works he has ever produced. The Academy pictures were far inferior to them, but among these, examples of the same power were not wanting, more especially in the smaller pictures of Venice. The Sun of Venice, going to Sea, the San Benedetto, looking towards . . ."

For the drawings and sketches of 1842, see Epilogue to Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner.*]

[2] [The Walhalla is "The Opening of the Walhalla" (1842), No. 533 in the National Gallery collection (now exhibited at Dublin). For the cracking and fading of Turner's paintings, see further, *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi. § 14, ch. xii. § 31; *Notes on the Turner Gallery, s.* No. 516; and *Notes on his Drawings by Turner, s.* No. 62. For "the utter neglect of the pictures" in Turner's gallery, see Thornbury's *Life of Turner*, 1877, ch. xxv., and cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pref. § 2. For the question of the fading of Turner's drawings, see Ruskin's *Catalogue of the Turner Sketches in the National Gallery* (1857), and his letters to the *Times* reprinted in the *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Water-Colour Drawings by Deceased Masters of the British School* (Royal Institute, 1886). Ruskin, in a letter from Venice (Sept. 10, 1845), says to his father, "I am very glad you are not disappointed with your Turners, but I am frightened lest Foord should have persuaded you to mount them; he is always trying at that—confound him! and they may be half spoiled if you let them go."]

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J.M.W. Turner R.A. Allen & Co. Sc.

The Dogana, and Santa Maria della Salute, Venice.

From the Picture in possession of James Rose Esq.

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two whaling subjects. The Venice is a second-rate work, and the two others altogether unworthy of him.[1]

In conclusion of our present sketch of the course of

[1] ["The 'Sun of Venice' going to sea" (1843) is No. 535 in the National Gallery; see *Notes on the Turner Gallery* for a description of it, and, for other references, below, pt. ii. sec. v. ch. iii. § 11, p. 545; *Harbours of England*, ed. 1895, p. 49; *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. App. 2. The fidelity to the spirit of Venice shown in this and other Turners of the period had greatly impressed Ruskin in 1845. In a letter to his father (Sept. 14) Ruskin deplores the progress of "restoration" and "improvements," but continues:—

> "One only consolation I have—the finding, among the wrecks of Venice, authority for all that Turner has done of her. I am not indeed surprised to find with what care he has noted, and with what dexterity he has used, every atom of material—to find his baskets in the water, his heads of boats out of it, his oranges and vines hanging over their loaded sides; but I was a little taken aback when yesterday at six in the morning—with the early sunlight just flushing its folds—out came a fishing-boat with its painted sail full to the wind—the most gorgeous orange and red;—in everything, form, colour, and feeling—the very counterpart of the 'Sol di Venezia': it is impossible that any model could be more rigidly exact than the painting, even to the height of the sail above the deck. All his skies are here too, or would be, if man would let them alone; but yesterday, as I was trying to note some morning clouds, a volume of smoke from a manufactory on the Rialto blotted everything as black as the Thames."

The "Sol di Venezia" was already a great favourite with Ruskin. In his diary he writes:—

> *April* 29, 1844.—Yesterday, when I called with my father on Turner, he was kinder than I ever remember. He shook hands most cordially with my father, wanted us to have a glass of wine, asked us to go upstairs into the gallery. When there, I went immediately in search of the "Sol di Venezia," saying it was my favourite. "I thought," said Turner, "it was 'St. Benedetto.'" It was flattering that he remembered I had told him this. I said the worst of his pictures was one could never see enough of them. "That's part of their quality," said Turner.

The "San Benedetto, looking towards Fusina" (1843) is No. 534 in the National Gallery; see *Notes on the Turner Gallery* for a description of it, and, for another reference, *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vii. ch. ii. § 16. Turner's title for this picture was inaccurate (the Church of San Benedetto being in a different part of Venice); it is now called "Approach to Venice," etc. Ruskin (as we learn from his diary of Feb. 8, 1844) had made an oil-study from this picture.

The picture which Ruskin here and in the *Notes on his Drawings by Turner* (No. 62 and 11 R. (*b*)) calls "Murano and Cemetery" is the "Campo Santo" (1842), formerly in the possession of Ruskin's friend and neighbour at Herne Hill, Mr. E. Bicknell (for whom it was painted). He lent it to Ruskin, who made from its sky the drawing engraved in Plate 67 of *Modern Painters* (see vol. v. pt. vii. ch. ii. § 15). "It was," says Ruskin, in his Turner Notes, "the most perfect of all the late Venices." It is so still; at the Guildhall Exhibition in 1899 (lent by Mrs. Keiller), it was seen to be in better condition than the National Gallery pictures above mentioned.

The other "picture of Venice, seen from near Fusina," etc., is the "Approach to Venice" (1844), formerly in the possession of Mr. B. G. Windus, now in that of Mrs. Moir; for other references to it, see Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, Introduction, and *s*. No. 62.

Turner's pictures at the Royal Academy in 1845 were "Whalers" (two pictures), "Venice: Evening, going to the Ball" (N.G., No. 543), "Venice: Morning, returning from the Ball" (N.G., No. 544), "Venice: Noon" (N.G., No. 541), and "Venice: Sunset" (N.G., No. 542). As these Venices are all of the same size, it is impossible

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landscape art,[1] it may be generally stated that Turner is the only painter, so far as I know, who has ever drawn the sky, not the clear sky, which we before saw belonged exclusively to the religious schools, but the various forms and phenomena of the cloudy heavens; all previous artists having only represented it typically or partially, but he absolutely and universally. He is the only painter who has ever drawn a mountain, or a stone;[2] no other man ever having learned their organization, or possessed himself of their spirit, except in part and obscurely (the one or two stones noted of Tintoret's, in vol. ii. (sec. ii. ch. iii. § 28 *n.*), are perhaps hardly enough on which to found an exception in his favour). He is the only painter who ever drew the stem of a tree, Titian having come the nearest before him, and excelling him in the muscular development of the larger trunks (though sometimes losing the woody strength in a serpent-like flaccidity), but missing the grace and character of the ramifications. He is the only painter who has ever represented the surface of calm, or the force of agitated water; who has represented the effects of space on distant objects, or who has rendered the abstract beauty of natural colour. These assertions I make deliberately, after careful weighing and consideration, in no spirit of dispute, or momentary zeal; but from strong and convinced feeling, and with the consciousness of being able to prove them.

This proof is only partially and incidentally attempted in the present portion of this work, which was originally written, as before explained,[3] for a temporary purpose, and which, therefore, I should have gladly cancelled, but that, relating as it does only to simple matters of fact and not to those of feeling, it may still, perhaps, be of service to some readers who would be unwilling to enter into the more speculative fields with which the succeeding sections are concerned. I leave,

to distinguish the one referred to above. None of them is mentioned in the *Notes on the Turner Gallery*. Of the two Whalers, one is No. 545 in the National Gallery; the other is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.]

[1] [Ruskin in his copy for revision has marked this passage, "In conclusion . . . prove them," as if in special approval.]

[2] [See *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. x. § 5, where Ruskin refers to this statement, and reaffirms it.]

[3] [Above, prefaces to 1st and 3rd eds.]

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therefore, nearly as it was originally written, the following examination of the relative truthfulness of elder and of recent art; always requesting the reader to remember, as some excuse for the inadequate execution, even of what I have here attempted, how difficult it is to express or explain, by language only, those delicate qualities of the object of sense, on the seizing of which all refined truth of representation depends. Try, for instance, to explain in language the exact qualities of the lines on which depend the whole truth and beauty of expression about the half-opened lips of Raffaelle's St. Catherine.[1] There is indeed nothing in landscape so ineffable as this; but there is no part nor portion of God's works in which the delicacy appreciable by a cultivated eye, and necessary to be rendered in art, is not beyond all expression and explanation; I cannot tell it you, if you do not see it. And thus I have been entirely unable, in the following pages, to demonstrate clearly anything of really deep and perfect truth; nothing but what is coarse and commonplace, in matters to be judged of by the senses, is within the reach of argument. How much or how little I have done must be judged of by the reader: how much it is impossible to do I have more fully shown in the concluding section.

§ 47. Difficulty of demonstration in such subjects.

I shall first take into consideration those general truths, common to all the objects of nature, which are productive of what is usually called "effect," that is to say, truths of tone, general colour, space, and light. I shall then investigate the truths of specific form and colour, in the four great component parts of landscape—sky, earth, water, and vegetation.

[The following is the conclusion of this chapter as it stood in eds. 1 and 2 (see above, p. 169)]:—

Who, that has one spark of feeling for what is beautiful or true, would not turn to be refreshed by the pure and extended realizations of modern art! How many have we—how various in their aim and sphere—embracing one by one every feeling and lesson of the creation! David Cox, whose pencil never falls but in dew—simple-minded as a child, gentle, and loving all things that are pure and

§ 6. And with the feeling of modern artists.

[1] [See above, p. 31, *n.* 2.]

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lowly—content to lie quiet among the rustling leaves, and sparkling grass, and purple-cushioned heather, only to watch the soft white clouds melting with their own motion, and the dewy blue dropping through them like rain, so that he may but cast from him as pollution all that is proud, and artificial, and unquiet, and worldly, and possess his spirit in humility and peace. Copley Fielding, casting his whole soul into space—exulting like a wild deer in the motion of the swift mists, and the free far surfaces of the untrodden hills—now wandering with the quick, pale, fitful sun-gleams over the dim swells and sweeps of grey downs and shadowy dingles, until, lost half in light and half in vapour, they melt into the blue of the plain as the cloud does into the sky—now climbing with the purple sunset along the aërial slopes of the quiet mountains, only known from the red clouds by their stillness—now flying with the wild wind and sifted spray along the white, driving, desolate sea; but always with the passion for nature's freedom burning in his heart, so that every leaf in his foreground is a wild one, and every line of his hills is limitless. J. D. Harding, brilliant and vigorous, and clear in light as nature's own sunshine—deep in knowledge, exquisite in feeling of every form that nature falls into—following with his quick, keen dash the sunlight into the crannies of the rocks, and the wind into the tangling of the grass, and the bright colour into the fall of the sea-foam—various, universal in his aim—master alike of all form and feature of crag, or torrent, or forest, or cloud; but English, all English at his heart, returning still to rest under the shade of some spreading elm, where the fallow deer butt among the bending fern, and the quiet river glides noiselessly by its reedy shore, and the yellow corn sheaves glow along the flanks of the sloping hills. Clarkson Stanfield, firm and fearless, and unerring in his knowledge—stern and decisive in his truth—perfect and certain in composition—shunning nothing, concealing nothing, and falsifying nothing—never affected, never morbid, never failing—conscious of his strength, but never ostentatious of it—acquainted with every line and hue of the *deep* sea—chiselling his waves with unhesitating knowledge of every curve of their anatomy, and every moment of their motion—building his mountains rock by rock, with wind in every fissure and weight in every stone—and modelling the masses of his sky with the strength of tempest in their every fold. And Turner—glorious in conception—unfathomable in knowledge—solitary in power—with the elements waiting upon his will, and the night and the morning obedient to his call, sent as a prophet of God to reveal to men the mysteries of His universe, standing, like the great angel of the Apocalypse, clothed with a cloud, and with a rainbow upon his head, and with the sun and stars given into his hand.[1]

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[1] [This passage was quoted by *Blackwood* as "somewhat blaspheming the Divine attributes," and the following remarks were added :—"Little as we are disposed to laugh at any such aberrations, we must, to remove from our minds the greater, the more serious offence, indulge in a small degree of justifiable ridicule; and ask what will sculptor or painter make of this description, should the reluctant public be convinced by the Graduate, and in their penitential reverence order statue or painting of Mr. Turner for the Temple of Fame, which it is presumed Parliament, in their artistic zeal, mean to erect? How will they venture to represent Mr. Turner looking like an angel—in that dress which would make any man look a fool—his cloud nightcap tied with a rainbow riband round his head, calling to night and morning, and little caring which comes, making ducks and drakes of the sun and stars, put into his hand for that

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But I must not anticipate my subject—what I have asserted must be proved by deliberate investigation of facts, and in no way left dependent upon feeling or imagination. Yet I may, perhaps, before proceeding into detail, illustrate my meaning more completely by a comparison of the kind of truths impressed upon us in the painting of Venice by Canaletti, Prout, Stanfield, and Turner.

§ 7. The character of Venice as given by Canaletti.[1]

The effect of a fine Canaletti is, in its first impression, dioramic. We fancy we are in our beloved Venice again, with one foot, by mistake, in the clear, invisible film of water lapping over the marble steps of the foreground. Every house has its proper relief against the sky—every brick and stone its proper hue of sunlight and shade—and every degree of distance its proper tone of retiring air. Presently, however, we begin to feel that it is lurid and gloomy, and that the painter, compelled by the lowness of the utmost light at his disposal to deepen the shadows, in order to get the right relation, has lost the flashing, dazzling, exulting light, which was one of our chief sources of Venetian happiness. But we pardon this, knowing it to be unavoidable, and begin to look for something of that in which Venice differs from Rotterdam, or any other city built beside canals. We know that house, certainly; we never passed it without stopping our gondolier, for its arabesques were as rich as a bank of flowers in spring, and as beautiful as a dream. What has Canaletti given us for them? Five black dots. Well; take the next house. We remember that too; it was mouldering inch by inch into the canal, and the bricks had fallen away from its shattered marble shafts, and left them white and skeleton-like; yet, with their fretwork of cold flowers wreathed about them still, untouched by time, and through the rents of the wall behind them there used to come long sunbeams, greened by the weeds through which they pierced, which flitted and fell, one by one, round those grey and quiet shafts, catching here a leaf and there a leaf and gliding over the illumined edges and delicate fissures, until they sank into the deep dark hollow between the marble blocks of the sunk foundation, lighting every other moment one isolated emerald lamp on the crest of the intermittent waves, when the wild sea-weeds and crimson lichens drifted and crawled with their thousand colours and fine branches over its decay, and the black, clogging, accumulated limpets hung in ropy clusters from the dripping and tinkling stone. What has Canaletti given us for this? One square red mass, composed of—let me count—five-and-fifty, no; six-and-fifty, no; I was right at first—five-and-fifty bricks, of precisely the same size, shape, and colour, one great black line for the shadow of the roof at the top, and six similar ripples in a row at the bottom! And this is what people call "painting nature"! It is, indeed, painting nature—as she appears to the most unfeeling and untaught of mankind. The bargeman and the bricklayer probably see no more in Venice than Canaletti gives—heaps of earth and mortar, with water between—and are just as capable of appreciating the facts of sunlight and shadow, by which he deceives us, as the most educated of us all. But what more there is in Venice than brick and stone—what there is

purpose?" (Oct. 1843, p. 492). Ruskin's father, in a letter to W. H. Harrison commenting on this review, described it as "heartless, inasmuch as there were pure and young effusions in the book that might have touched a man of feeling."]

[1] [For Ruskin's early spelling of this artist's name, see Vol. I. p. 223 *n.*]

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of mystery and death, and memory and beauty—what there is to be learned or lamented, to be loved or wept—we look for to Canaletti in vain.

§ 8. *By Prout.*

Let us pass to Prout.[1] The imitation is lost at once. The buildings have nothing resembling their real relief against the sky; there are multitudes of false distances; the shadows in many places have a great deal more Vandyke-brown than darkness in them; and the lights very often more yellow-ochre than sunshine. But yet the effect on our eye is that very brilliancy and cheerfulness which delighted us in Venice itself, and there is none of that oppressive and lurid gloom which was cast upon our feelings by Canaletti.* And now we feel there is something in the subject worth drawing, and different from other subjects and architecture. That house is rich, and strange, and full of grotesque carving and character—that one next to it is shattered and infirm, and varied with picturesque rents and hues of decay—that farther off is beautiful in proportion, and strong in its purity of marble. Now we begin to feel that we are in Venice; this is what we could not get elsewhere; it is worth seeing, and drawing, and talking and thinking of,—not an exhibition of common daylight or brick walls. But let us look a little closer; we know those capitals very well; their design was most original and perfect, and so delicate that it seemed to have been cut in ivory;—what have we got for them here? Five straight strokes of a reed pen! No, Mr. Prout, it is not quite Venice yet.[2]

§ 9. *By Stanfield.*

Let us take Stanfield then. Now we are farther still from anything like Venetian tone; all is cold and comfortless, but there is air and good daylight, and we will not complain. And now let us look into the buildings, and all is perfection and fidelity; every shade and line full of feeling and truth, rich and solid, and substantial stone; every leaf and arabesque marked to its minutest curve and angle,—the marble crumbling, the wood mouldering, and the waves splashing and lapping before our eyes. But it is all drawn hard and sharp, there is nothing to hope for or find out, nothing to dream of or discover; we can measure and see it from base to battlement, there is nothing too fine for us to follow, nothing too full for us to fathom. This cannot be nature, for it is not infinity. No, Mr. Stanfield, it is scarcely Venice yet.

* It will be observed how completely I cast aside all mere *mechanical* excellence as unworthy of praise. Canaletti's *mechanism* is wonderful,—Prout's, the rudest possible; but there is not a grain of feeling in the one, and there is much in the other. In spite of all that can be alleged of the mannerism and imperfections of Prout as an artist, there is that in his drawings which will bring us back to them again and again, even after we have been rendered most fastidious by the exquisite drawing and perfect composition of the accomplished Roberts. There is an appreciation and realization of continental character in his works—a locality and life which have never yet been reached by any other of our architectural draughtsmen—and they are the sign of deep feeling and high genius, by whatever faults of manner they may be attained or accompanied; and we shall think ourselves in danger of losing our right feeling for art, and for nature too, when we find ourselves unable to turn occasionally from the refined grace of Roberts, and the absolute truth of Stanfield, to linger with Prout on the sunny side of a Flemish street, watching the fantastic peaks of its gables in the sky, and listening for the clatter of the sabot.

[1] [It will be seen from the facsimile here given, that in the early MS. draft of this passage the references to Prout were differently expressed.]

[2] [On the subject of this paragraph on Prout, see the letter to him in Appendix iii., p. 662.]

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what more there is in Venice than of brick and stone - what there is of mystery - of death - of memory - of beauty - what there is to be loved & lamented - to be wooed - & wept - you look for to Canaletto in vain.

Let us pass to Prout - Then - note. ~~I would not~~

Of course nothing of mere mechanical difficulty in art is here taken into consideration; ~~and the rank assigned to Prout has~~ I am fully aware of all the mannerism and error of system which put Prout - as an artist, into an exceedingly low rank But there is behind all this - something in his feeling, which had it been ~~rightly cultivated and if fortune had given him~~ had he had strength and opportunity for legitimate study - would have raised him to no mean position among the landscape painters of England. There is an appreciation and realization of continental character in his works, a locality & life, ~~as distinguished from the which in spite of~~ ~~the rude outline and~~ on the signs of decay & foreign birth than ~~when~~ distinct & avoid, ~~and~~ could be imagined to be couched under the rude outline and exaggerated treatment. There is something in his drawings which will bring us back to them again and again in spite of every conversion that they are unartistical & wrong. The eye will be more & more offended every time we turn to them

FACSIMILE OF A PAGE OF AN EARLY DRAFT OF "MODERN PAINTERS," VOL. I
(Pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. §§ 7-8, in the First Edition)

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But let us take, with Turner, the last and greatest step of all. Thank heaven, we are in sunshine again,—and what sunshine! Not the lurid, gloomy, plague-like oppression of Canaletti, but white, flashing fulness of dazzling light, which the waves drink and the clouds breathe, bounding and burning in intensity of joy. That sky, —it is a very visible infinity,—liquid, measureless, unfathomable, panting and melting through the chasms in the long fields of snow-white, flaked, slow-moving vapour, that guide the eye along their multitudinous waves down to the islanded rest of the Euganean hills. Do we dream, or does the white forked sail drift nearer, and nearer yet, diminishing the blue sea between us with the fulness of its wings? It pauses now; but the quivering of its bright reflection troubles the shadows of the sea, those azure, fathomless depths of crystal mystery, on which the swiftness of the poised gondola floats double, its black beak lifted like the crest of a dark ocean bird, its scarlet draperies flashed back from the kindling surface, and its bent oar breaking the radiant water into a dust of gold. Dreamlike and dim, but glorious, the unnumbered palaces lift their shafts out of the hollow sea,—pale ranks of motionless flame, —their mighty towers sent up to heaven like tongues of more eager fire,— their grey domes looming vast and dark, like eclipsed worlds,—their sculptured arabesques and purple marble fading farther and fainter, league beyond league, lost in the light of distance. Detail after detail, thought beyond thought, you find and feel them through the radiant mystery, inexhaustible as indistinct, beautiful, but never all revealed; secret in fulness, confused in symmetry, as nature herself is to the bewildered and foiled glance, giving out of that indistinctness, and through that confusion, the perpetual newness of the infinite, and the beautiful.

§ 10. *By Turner.*

Yes, Mr. Turner, we are in Venice now.

I think the above example may, at least, illustrate my meaning, and render clear the distinction which I wish the reader always to keep in mind, between those truths which are selected as a means of deception, and those which are selected for their own sake. How few of the latter are usually given by the old masters, I shall proceed to show; but in so doing I shall not take particular instances of local character like the above, but shall confine myself to those general truths of nature which are common to all countries and times, and which are independent of local or national character, partly because the works of the old masters are for the most part intended not to be particular portraiture, but ideal or general nature; and partly because the representation of the local character of scenery will more properly be considered under the head of ideas of relation, as it necessarily bears the same relation to ideal landscape which the representation of individual character does to that of the ideal human form, animated by its perfect and generic mind. At present, therefore, I leave out of the question all consideration of peculiar and local character, though, in doing so, I omit one of the chief and most essential qualities of truth in at least one-half of the works of our greatest modern master, and I am content to take that which is universal in the moderns, and compare it with that which is suffered to be universal in the ancients. And when we have investigated the nature and desirableness of ideas of relation, we will take up those parts of the works of both schools which are local, and observe how the

§ 11. *The system to be observed in comparing works with reference to truth.*

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knowledge of specific character is used to awaken and direct the current of particular thought. In the execution of our immediate task, we shall be compelled to notice only a few of the most striking and demonstrable facts of nature. To trace out the actual sum of truth or falsehood in any one work, touch by touch, would require an essay on every department of physical science, and then a chapter to every inch of canvass. All that can be done is to take the broad principles and laws of nature, and show, in one or two conspicuous instances, where they have been observed, and where violated, and so to leave the reader to find out for himself how the observation and violation have been continued in every part, and down to the most delicate touches. I can do little more than suggest the right train of thought and mode of observation; to carry it fully out must be left to the feeling and the industry of the observer. And as some apology for the most inadequate execution even of what I have attempted, it should be considered how difficult it is to express or explain, by language only, those delicate qualities of the object of sense, on the seizing of which all refined truth of representation depends. Try, for instance, . . . in the concluding section [as in the text above, § 47, p. 253].

§ 12. *Difficulty of demonstration in such subjects.*

It would be needless, after having explained a given truth, to repeat the same phrases, "observe it here" or "trace it there," with respect to all the works in which it may happen to occur. I shall illustrate each truth from the works of the artist by whom I find it most completely and constantly given; commonly, therefore, from those of the father of modern art, J. M. W. Turner, and I shall then name the other artists in whom its faithful rendering is also deserving of praise.

"I shall first . . . vegetation" [as in the text above, § 47, p. 253. Then followed a concluding sentence: "Architecture will be slightly noticed in the concluding section of the present part; more fully in the following parts of the work." The scheme, however, was subsequently altered. Architectural drawing was noticed in the third edition in this chapter (§§ 25–35, pp. 202–226 above); the principles of architecture itself were reserved for a separate treatise, *The Seven Lamps*.]

§ 13. *General plan of investigation.*

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SECTION II

OF GENERAL TRUTHS

CHAPTER I

OF TRUTH OF TONE

As I have already allowed, that in effects of tone, the old masters have never yet been equalled; and as this is the first, and nearly the last, concession I shall have to make to them, I wish it at once to be thoroughly understood how far it extends.

§ 1. Meanings of the word "tone:"—First, the right relation of objects in shadow to the principal light.

I understand two things by the word Tone: first, the exact relief and relation of objects against and to each other in substance and darkness, as they are nearer or more distant, and the perfect relation of the shades of all of them to the chief light of the picture, whether that be sky, water, or anything else; secondly, the exact relation of the colours of the shadows to the colours of the lights, so that they may be at once felt to be merely different degrees of the same light; and the accurate relation among the illuminated parts themselves, with respect to the degree in which they are influenced by the colour of the light itself, whether warm or cold; so that the whole of the picture (or, where several tones are united, those parts of it which are under each) may be felt to be in one climate, under one kind of light, and in one kind of atmosphere; this being chiefly dependent on that peculiar and inexplicable quality of each colour laid on, which makes the eye feel both what is the actual colour of the object represented, and that it is raised to its apparent

§ 2. Secondly, the quality of colour by which it is felt to owe part of its brightness to the hue of light upon it.

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pitch by illumination. A very bright brown, for instance, out of sunshine, may be precisely of the same shade of colour as a very dead or cold brown in sunshine, but it will be totally different in *quality;* and that quality by which the illuminated dead colour would be felt in nature different from the unilluminated bright one, is what artists are perpetually aiming at, and connoisseurs talking nonsense about, under the name of "tone." The want of tone in pictures is caused by objects looking bright in their own positive hue, and not by illumination, and by the consequent want of sensation of the raising of their hues by light.

§ 3. Difference between tone in its first sense and aërial perspective.

The first of these meanings of the word Tone is liable to be confounded with what is commonly called "aërial perspective." But aërial perspective is the expression of space by any means whatsoever, sharpness of edge, vividness of colour, etc., assisted by greater pitch of shadow, and requires only that objects should be detached from each other by degrees of intensity in *proportion* to their distance, without requiring that the difference between the farthest and nearest should be in positive quantity the same that nature has put. But what I have called "tone" requires that there should be the same sum of difference, as well as the same division of differences.

§ 4. The pictures of the old masters perfect in relation of middle tints to light.

Now the finely-toned pictures of the old masters are, in this respect, some of the notes of nature played two or three octaves below her key; the dark objects in the middle distance having precisely the same relation to the light of the sky which they have in nature, but the light being necessarily infinitely lowered, and the mass of the shadow deepened in the same degree. I have often been struck, when looking at the image in a camera-obscura on a dark day, with the exact resemblance it bore to one of the finest pictures of the old masters; all the foliage coming dark against the sky, and nothing being seen in its mass but here and there the isolated light of a silvery stem or an unusually illumined cluster of leafage.

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Now if this could be done consistently, and all the notes of nature given in this way an octave or two down, it would be right and necessary so to do: but be it observed, not only does nature surpass us in power of obtaining light as much as the sun surpasses white paper,[1] but she also infinitely surpasses us in her power of shade. Her deepest shades are void spaces from which no light whatever is reflected to the eye; ours are black surfaces from which, paint as black as we may, a great deal of light is still reflected, and which, placed against one of nature's deep bits of gloom, would tell as distinct light. Here we are, then, with white paper for our highest light, and visible illumined surface for our deepest shadow, set to run the gauntlet against nature, with the sun for her light, and vacuity for her gloom. It is evident that *she* can well afford to throw her material objects dark against the brilliant aërial tone of her sky, and yet give in those objects themselves a thousand intermediate distances and tones before she comes to black, or to anything like it—all the illumined surfaces of her objects being as distinctly and vividly brighter than her nearest and darkest shadows, as the sky is brighter than those illumined surfaces. But if we, against our poor dull obscurity of yellow paint, instead of sky, insist on having the same relation of shade in material objects, we go down to the bottom of our scale at once; and what in the world are we to do then? Where are all our intermediate distances to come from?—how are we to express the aërial relations among the parts themselves; for instance, of foliage, whose most distant boughs are already almost black?—how are we to come up from this to the foreground; and when we have done so, how are we to express the distinction between its solid parts, already as dark as we can make them, and its vacant hollows, which nature has marked sharp and clear and black, among its lighted surfaces? It cannot but be evident at a glance, that if to any one of the steps from one distance to another, we give the same

§ 5. And consequently totally false in relation of middle tints to darkness.

[1] [Ruskin returned to this point, and illustrated it further, in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*, ch. iii. § 1.]

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quantity of difference in pitch of shade which nature does, we must pay for this expenditure of our means by totally missing half a dozen distances, not a whit less important or marked, and so sacrifice a multitude of truths, to obtain one. And this accordingly was the means by which the old masters obtained their truth (?) of tone. They chose those steps of distance which are the most conspicuous and noticeable, that for instance from sky to foliage, or from clouds to hills; and they gave these their precise pitch of difference in shade with exquisite accuracy of imitation. Their means were then exhausted, and they were obliged to leave their trees flat masses of mere filled-up outline, and to omit the truths of space in every individual part of their picture by the thousand. But this they did not care for; it saved them trouble; they reached their grand end, imitative effect; they thrust home just at the places where the common and careless eye looks for imitation, and they attained the broadest and most faithful appearance of truth of tone which art can exhibit.

§ 6. General falsehood of such a system.

But they are prodigals, and foolish prodigals in art; they lavish their whole means to get one truth, and leave themselves powerless when they should seize a thousand. And is it indeed worthy of being called a truth, when we have a vast history given us to relate, to the fulness of which neither our limits nor our language are adequate, instead of giving all its parts abridged in the order of their importance, to omit or deny the greater part of them, that we may dwell with verbal fidelity on two or three? Nay, the very truth to which the rest are sacrificed, is rendered falsehood by their absence; the relation of the tree to the sky is marked as an impossibility by the want of relation of its parts to each other.

§ 7. The principle of Turner in this respect.

Turner starts from the beginning with a totally different principle. He boldly takes pure white (and justly, for it is the sign of the most intense sunbeams) for his highest light, and lampblack for his deepest shade; and between these he makes every degree of shade

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indicative of a separate degree of distance,* giving each step of approach, not the exact difference in pitch which it would have in nature, but a difference bearing the same proportion to that which his sum of possible shade bears to the sum of nature's shade; so that an object half-way between his horizon and his foreground, will be exactly in half tint of force, and every minute division of intermediate space will have just its proportionate share of the lesser sum, and no more. Hence where the old masters expressed one distance, he expresses a hundred, and where they said furlongs, he says leagues. Which of these modes of procedure be the more agreeable with truth, I think I may safely leave the reader to decide for himself. He will see, in this very first instance, one proof of what we above asserted, that the deceptive imitation of nature is inconsistent with real truth; for the very means by which the old masters attained the apparent accuracy of tone which is so satisfying to the eye, compelled them to give up all idea of real relations of retirement, and to represent a few successive and marked stages of distance, like the scenes of a theatre, instead of the imperceptible, multitudinous, symmetrical retirement of nature, who is not more careful to separate her nearest bush from her farthest one, than to separate the nearest bough of that bush from the one next to it.

§ 8. *Comparison of N. Poussin's "Phocion,"*

Take, for instance, one of the finest landscapes that ancient art has produced—the work of a really great and intellectual mind, the quiet Nicolas Poussin in our own National Gallery, with the traveller washing his feet.[1] The first idea we receive from this picture is that it is evening, and all the light coming from the horizon. Not so. It is full noon, the light coming steep from the left,

* Of course I am not speaking here of treatment of chiaroscuro, but of that quantity of depth of shade by which, *cæteris paribus*, a near object will exceed a distant one. For the truth of the systems of Turner and the old masters, as regards chiaroscuro, *vide* Chapter III. of this section, § 8.

[1] [No. 40. For other references, see below, sec. ii. ch. iii. § 4, sec. iii. ch. iv. § 23, pp. 305, 410. Constable, who made some studies from this picture, was of the same opinion with regard to the feeling of it. In a letter to Fisher he describes it as "a noble Poussin: a solemn, deep, still summer's noon, with large umbrageous trees, and

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as is shown by the shadow of the stick on the right-hand pedestal; for if the sun were not very high, that shadow could not lose itself half-way down, and if it were not lateral, the shadow would slope, instead of being vertical. Now ask yourself, and answer candidly, if those black masses of foliage, in which scarcely any form is seen but the outline, be a true representation of trees under noon-day sunlight, sloping from the left, bringing out, as it necessarily would do, their masses into golden green, and marking every leaf and bough with sharp shadow and sparkling light. The only truth in the picture is the exact pitch of relief against the sky of both trees and hills; and to this the organization of the hills, the intricacy of the foliage, and everything indicative either of the nature of the light, or the character of the objects, are unhesitatingly sacrificed. So much falsehood does it cost to obtain two apparent truths of tone! Or take, as a still more glaring instance, No. 260 in the Dulwich Gallery,[1] where the trunks of the trees, even of those farthest off, on the left, are as black as paint can make them; and there is not, and cannot be, the slightest increase of force, or any marking whatsoever of distance, by colour, or any other means, between them and the foreground.

§ 9. *With Turner's "Mercury and Argus,"*

Compare with these, Turner's treatment of his materials in the Mercury and Argus.[2] He has here his light actually coming from the distance, the sun being nearly in the centre of the picture, and a violent relief of objects against it would be far more justifiable than in Poussin's case. But this dark relief is used in its full force only with the nearest *leaves* of the nearest group of foliage overhanging the foreground from the

a man washing his feet at a fountain near them. Through the breaks in the trees are mountains, and the clouds collecting about them with the most enchanting effects possible. It cannot be too much to say that this landscape is full of religious and moral feeling" (Leslie's *Life of Constable*, p. 90.)]

[1] [Now No. 203, "A Roman Road," and attributed in the catalogue of the Gallery (by J. P. Richter and J. C. L. Sparkes, 1880) to an "unknown scholar or imitator of N. Poussin." For another reference to the picture, see below, sec. ii. ch. v. § 6, p. 330.]

[2] [One of the pictures of 1836, in defence of which the first germ of *Modern Painters* originated; see below, p. 638; and for other references to the picture, pp. 292, 300 *n.*, 364, 422, 485, 492, 558, 587 *n.*, 594, 596 *n.*]

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left; and between these and the more distant members of the same group, though only three or four yards separate, distinct aërial perspective and intervening mist and light are shown; while the large tree in the centre, though very dark, as being very near, compared with all the distance, is much diminished in intensity of shade from this nearest group of leaves, and is faint compared with all the foreground. It is true that this tree has not, in consequence, the actual pitch of shade against the sky which it would have in nature; but it has precisely as much as it possibly can have, to leave it the same proportionate relation to the objects near at hand. And it cannot but be evident to the thoughtful reader, that whatever trickery or deception may be the result of a contrary mode of treatment, this is the only scientific or essentially truthful system, and that what it loses in tone it gains in aërial perspective.

§ 10. *And with the "Datur Hora Quieti."*

Compare again the last vignette in Rogers's Poems, the "Datur Hora Quieti," where everything, even the darkest parts of the trees, is kept pale and full of gradation; even the bridge, where it crosses the descending stream of sunshine, rather lost in the light than relieved against it, until we come up to the foreground, and then the vigorous local black of the plough throws the whole picture into distance and sunshine. I do not know anything in art which can for a moment be set beside this drawing, for united intensity of light and repose.[1]

§ 11. *The second sense of the word "tone."*

Observe, I am not at present speaking of the beauty or desirableness of the system of the old masters; it may be sublime, and affecting, and ideal, and intellectual, and a great deal more; but all I am concerned with at present is, that it is not *true*; while Turner's is the closest and most studied approach to truth of which the materials of art admit.

It was not, therefore, with reference to this division of the subject that I admitted inferiority in our great modern master

[1] [The original drawing for the vignette is No. 397 in the National Gallery; for other references to it, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. viii. ch. ii. § 5, and *Elements of Drawing*, § 242.]

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to Claude or Poussin; but with reference to the second and more usual meaning of the word Tone,—the exact relation and fitness of shadow and light, and of the hues of all objects under them; and more especially that precious quality of each colour laid on, which makes it appear a quiet colour illuminated, not a bright colour in shade. But I allow this inferiority only with respect to the paintings of Turner, not to his drawings. I could select from among the works named in Chap. V. of the next section, pieces of tone absolutely faultless and perfect, from the coolest greys of wintry dawn to the intense fire of summer noon.[1] And the difference between the prevailing character of these and that of nearly all the paintings (for the early oil pictures of Turner are far less perfect in tone than the most recent), it is difficult to account for, but on the supposition that there is something in the material which modern artists in general are incapable of mastering, and which compels Turner himself to think less of tone in oil colour than of other and more important qualities. The total failures of Callcott,[2] whose struggles after tone ended so invariably in shivering winter or brown paint, the misfortune of Landseer with his evening sky in 1842,[3] the frigidity of Stanfield, and the earthiness and opacity which all the magnificent power and admirable science of Etty[4] are

§ 12. Remarkable difference in this respect between the paintings and drawings of Turner.

[1] [After "intense fire of summer noon," eds. 1 and 2 add :—

"The Cowes, Devonport with the Dockyard, Colchester, Okehampton, Folkestone, Cologne, Kenilworth, Durham, and Dudley might be instanced as cases of every effect of the most refined and precious tone, which we might fearlessly, if not triumphantly, compare with the very finest works of the old masters. And the difference," etc.

The drawings mentioned in this note are, with the exception of the Cologne, in the "England and Wales" series. The Dudley (in Ruskin's collection, No. 32 in his *Notes*) is reproduced in colour in *Lectures on Landscape*. Cologne was often drawn by Turner, *e.g.* two drawings in the Farnley collection, and the drawing in vol. xvi. in the *Works of Byron* (1834).]

[2] [See above, p. 191, and below, p. 275 *n.*]

[3] ["The Sanctuary," No. 431 in the Academy of 1842, bought by Queen Victoria.]

[4] [Ruskin's views of Etty varied in expression, according with the standard applied at the time. He is praised in the review of Eastlake's *History of Oil-Painting* (reprinted from the *Quarterly*, § 38), and in *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xiv. §§ 20–24; but in a footnote added to that passage in the 1883 ed. the praise is taken back. See also *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, § 129.]

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unable entirely to conquer, are too fatal and convincing proofs of the want of knowledge of means, rather than of the absence of aim, in modern artists as a body. Yet, with respect to Turner, however much the want of tone in his early paintings (the Fall of Carthage, for instance, and others painted at a time when he was producing the most exquisite hues of light in water-colour) might seem to favour such a supposition, there are passages in his recent works (such, for instance, as the sunlight along the sea, in the Slaver) which directly contradict it, and which prove to us that where he now errs in tone (as in the Cicero's Villa), it is less owing to want of power to reach it, than to the pursuit of some different and nobler end. I shall therefore glance at the particular modes in which Turner manages his tone in his present Academy pictures; the early ones must be given up at once. Place a genuine untouched Claude beside the Crossing the Brook, and the difference in value and tenderness of tone will be felt in an instant, and felt the more painfully because all the cool and transparent qualities of Claude would have been here desirable, and in their place, and appear to have been aimed at. The foreground of the Building of Carthage, and the greater part of the architecture of the Fall, are equally heavy and evidently paint, if we compare them with genuine passages of Claude's sunshine. There is a very grand and simple piece of tone in the possession of J. Allnutt, Esq., a Sunset behind willows; but even this is wanting in refinement of shadow, and is crude in its extreme distance. Not so with the recent Academy pictures; many of their passages are absolutely faultless; all are refined and marvellous, and with the exception of the Cicero's Villa, we shall find few pictures[1] painted within the last ten years which do not either present us with perfect tone, or with some higher beauty to which it is necessarily sacrificed. If we glance at the requirements of nature, and her

§ 13. *Not owing to want of power over the material.*

[1] [For "shall find few pictures . . . which do," eds. 1 and 2 read, "shall not find a single . . . which does."]

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superiority of means to ours, we shall see why and how it is sacrificed.[1]

§ 14. The two distinct qualities of light to be considered.

Light, with reference to the tone it induces on objects, is either to be considered as neutral and white, bringing out local colours with fidelity; or coloured, and consequently modifying these local tints with its own. But the power of pure white light to exhibit local colour is strangely variable. The morning light of about nine or ten is usually very pure; but the difference of its effect on different days, independently of mere brilliancy, is as inconceivable as inexplicable. Every one knows how capriciously the colours of a fine opal vary from day to day, and how rare the lights are which bring them fully out. Now the expression of the strange, penetrating, deep, neutral light, which, while it *alters* no colour, brings every colour up to the highest possible pitch and key of pure harmonious intensity, is the chief attribute of finely toned pictures by the great *colourists*, as opposed to pictures of equally high tone, by masters who, careless of colour, are content, like Cuyp, to lose local tints in the golden blaze of absorbing light.

§ 15. Falsehoods by which Titian attains the appearance of quality in light.

Falsehood, in this neutral tone, if it may be so called, is a matter far more of feeling than of proof, for any colour is *possible* under such lights; it is meagreness and feebleness only which are to be avoided; and these are rather matters of sensation than of reasoning. But it is yet easy enough to prove by what exaggerated and false means the pictures most celebrated for this quality are endowed with their richness and solemnity of colour. In the Bacchus and Ariadne of Titian,[2] it is difficult to imagine anything more magnificently

[1] [For the "Fall of Carthage" see above, p. 241; for the "Slaver," below, p. 571; "Cicero's Villa," above, p. 241; "Crossing the Brook," p. 241; the "Building of Carthage," pp. 113, 241. The "Sunset behind Willows" is probably the picture of "Newark Abbey," painted in 1815, now in the collection of Sir Charles Tennant, and formerly in that of Mr. Allnutt, of Clapham.]

[2] [No. 35 in the National Gallery. For a later reference to this passage and to the unimpaired condition of the picture after cleaning, see Ruskin's letter to the *Times* of Jan. 7, 1847, on "Danger to the National Gallery," in *Arrows of the Chace*, 1880, i. 58. For other references to the picture, see above, pref. to 2nd ed., §§ 23, 26, pp. 29, 33; *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. ix. § 18, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. iii. § 31; *Academy Notes*, 1855; *Elements of Drawing*, §§ 71 *n.*, 77.]

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impossible than the blue of the distant landscape; impossible, not from its vividness, but because it is not faint and aërial enough to account for its purity of colour; it is too dark and blue at the same time; and there is indeed so total a want of atmosphere in it, that, but for the difference of form, it would be impossible to tell the mountains intended to be ten miles off, from the robe of Ariadne close to the spectator. Yet make this blue faint, aërial, and distant; make it in the slightest degree to resemble the truth of nature's colour; and all the tone of the picture, all its intensity and splendour, will vanish on the instant. So again, in the exquisite and inimitable little bit of colour, the Europa in the Dulwich Gallery;[1] the blue of the dark promontory on the left is thoroughly absurd and impossible, and the warm tones of the clouds equally so, unless it were sunset; but the blue especially, because it is nearer than several points of land which are equally in shadow, and yet are rendered in warm grey. But the whole value and tone of the picture would be destroyed if this blue were altered.

§ 16. *Turner will not use such means.*

Now, as much of this kind of richness of tone is always given by Turner as is compatible with truth of aërial effect; but he will not sacrifice the higher truths of his landscape to mere pitch of colour, as Titian does. He infinitely prefers having the power of giving extension of space, and fulness of form, to that of giving deep melodies of tone; he feels too much the incapacity of art, with its feeble means of light, to give the abundance of nature's gradations; and therefore it is, that taking pure white for his highest expression of light, that even pure yellow may give him one more step in the scale of shade, he becomes necessarily inferior in richness of effect to the old masters of tone who always used a golden highest light, but gains by the sacrifice a thousand more essential truths. For, though we all know how much more like light, in the abstract, a finely toned warm hue

§ 17. *But gains in essential truth by the sacrifice.*

[1] [No. 273 (formerly No. 230), "Europa on the Bull" (after Titian); the original picture, painted for the King of Spain, is in the Darnley collection at Cobham Hall.]

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will be to the feelings than white, yet it is utterly impossible to mark the same number of gradations between such a sobered high light and the deepest shadow, which we can between this and white; and as these gradations are absolutely necessary to give the facts of form and distance, which, as we have above shown, are more important than any truths of tone,* Turner sacrifices the richness of his picture to its completeness, the manner of the statement to its matter. And not only is he right in doing this for the sake of space, but he is right also in the abstract question of colour; for as we observed above (§ 14), it is only the white light, the perfect unmodified group of rays, which will bring out local colour perfectly; and if the picture, therefore, is to be complete in its system of colour, that is, if it is to have each of the three primitives in their purity, it *must* have white for its highest light, otherwise the purity of one of them at least will be impossible. And this leads us to notice the second and more frequent quality of light (which is assumed if we make our highest representation of it yellow), the positive hue, namely, which it may itself possess, of course modifying whatever local tints it exhibits, and thereby rendering certain colours necessary, and certain colours impossible. Under the direct yellow light of a descending sun, for instance, pure white and pure blue are both impossible; because the purest whites and blues that nature could produce would be turned in some degree into gold or green by it; and when the sun is within half a degree of the horizon, if the sky be clear, a rose light supersedes the golden one, still more overwhelming in its effect on local colour. I have seen the pale fresh green of spring vegetation in the gardens of Venice, on the Lido side, turned pure russet, or between that and crimson, by a vivid sunset of this kind,

§ 18. *The second quality of light.*

* More important, observe, *as matters of truth or fact.* It may often chance that, as a matter of feeling, the tone is the more important of the two; but with this we have here no concern.[1]

[1] [The above footnote did not appear in eds. 1 and 2.]

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every particle of green colour being absolutely annihilated.[1] And so under all coloured lights (and there are few, from dawn to twilight, which are not slightly tinted by some accident of atmosphere), there is a change of local colour, which, when in a picture it is so exactly proportioned that we feel at once both what the local colours are in themselves, and what are the colour and strength of the light upon them, gives us truth of tone.

§ 19. *The perfection of Cuyp in this respect interfered with by numerous solecisms.*

For expression of effects of yellow sunlight, parts might be chosen out of the good pictures of Cuyp, which have never been equalled in art.[2] But I much doubt if there be a single *bright* Cuyp in the world, which, taken as a whole, does not present many glaring solecisms in tone. I have not seen many fine pictures of his, which were not utterly spoiled by the vermilion dress of some principal figure, a vermilion totally unaffected and unwarmed by the golden hue of the rest of the picture; and, what is worse, with little distinction between its own illumined and shaded parts, so that it appears altogether out of sunshine, the colour of a bright vermilion in dead cold daylight. It is possible that the original colour may have

[1] [This was the effect noted by Ruskin in his diary at Venice on May 12, 1841; see the citation in Vol. I. p. xl. In the first draft of this passage (see below, p. 682) the recollection is given at greater length:—

"There are two qualities of light most carefully to be distinguished in speaking of the tone of a picture. 1st. Its own actual colour, which falls more or less on everything which it touches—neutralizing the colours existing in the objects themselves. Such is the well-known pure rose-colour which the rays of the sun assume five minutes before sunset. This colour is scarcely ever seen except on mountains and clouds, for the sun is too low before the tint is taken to permit its falling clear upon objects on a level with it, but sometimes, with a sea horizon, and a perfectly clear sky, it may be seen low. I adduce it as the most positive and overpowering tint of light I know, for no colour stands before it—green or blue or whatever it may be, all are turned nearly pure rose by it. It is of course seen in its greatest purity on the Alps, but often occurs very pure on the *highest* clouds, not the cumuli, but the streaky uppermost bars at sunset. I have seen it once at Venice, of extraordinary intensity—so totally overwhelming every local tint within its reach, as to admit of nothing like a guess at their actual colour, the rose appearing inherent and positive in them. The trees in the Botanic Gardens, especially, which were of a pure pale green—(it was May)—became not merely russet but pure red."]

[2] [For Ruskin's numerous references to Cuyp, see index volume to this edition; and *cf.* especially *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi.]

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gone down in all cases, or that these parts may have been villainously repainted; but I am the rather disposed to believe them genuine, because even throughout the best of his pictures there are evident recurrences of the same kind of solecism in other colours; greens, for instance, as in the steep bank on the right of the largest picture in the Dulwich Gallery;[1] and browns, as in the lying cow in the same picture, which is in most visible and painful contrast with the one standing beside it; the flank of the standing one being bathed in breathing sunshine, and the reposing one laid in with as dead, opaque, and lifeless brown as ever came raw from a novice's pallet. And again, in that marked 83,[2] while the figures on the right are walking in the most precious light, and those just beyond them in the distance leave a furlong or two of pure visible sunbeams between us and them, the cows in the centre are entirely deprived, poor things, of both light and air. And these failing parts, though they often escape the eye when we are near the picture and able to dwell upon what is beautiful in it, yet so injure its whole effect, that I question if there be many Cuyps in which vivid colours occur, which will not lose their effect and become cold and flat at a distance of ten or twelve paces, retaining their influence only when the eye is close enough to rest on the right parts without including the whole. Take, for instance, the large one in our National Gallery,[3] seen from the opposite door, where the black cow appears a great deal nearer than the dogs, and the golden tones of the distance look like a sepia drawing rather than like sunshine, owing chiefly to the utter want of aërial greys indicated through them.

Now, there is no instance in the works of Turner of anything so faithful and imitative of sunshine as the best parts of Cuyp; but, at the same time, there is not a single

[1] ["Landscape with Cattle and Figures," No. 169 (now No. 128). For other references to the same picture, see pp. 350, 370.]

[2] ["Landscape with Cattle and Figures," now No. 245. For other references, see below, pp. 511, 524.]

[3] [No. 53, "An Evening Landscape." For another reference, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vi. ch. v. § 7.]

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vestige of the same kind of solecism. It is true, that in his fondness for colour, Turner is in the habit of allowing excessively cold fragments in his warmest pictures; but these are never, observe, warm colours with no light upon them, useless as contrasts, while they are discords in the tone; but they are bits of the very coolest tints, partially removed from the general influence, and exquisitely valuable as colour, though, with all deference be it spoken, I think them sometimes slightly destructive of what would otherwise be perfect tone. For instance, the two blue and white stripes on the drifting flag of the Slave Ship, are, I think, the least degree too purely cool. I think both the blue and white would be impossible under such a light; and in the same way the white parts of the dress of the Napoleon interfere, by their coolness, with the perfectly managed warmth of all the rest of the picture.[1] But both these lights are reflexes, and it is nearly impossible to say what tones may be assumed even by the warmest light reflected from a cool surface; so that we cannot actually convict these parts of falsehood, and though we should have liked the *tone* of the picture better had they been slightly warmer, we cannot but like the *colour* of the picture better with them as they are; while, Cuyp's failing portions are not only evidently and demonstrably false, being in direct light, but are as disagreeable in colour as false in tone, and injurious to everything near them. And the best proof of the grammatical accuracy of the tones of Turner is in the perfect and unchanging influence of all his pictures at any distance. We approach only to follow the sunshine into every cranny of the leafage, and retire only to feel it diffused over the scene, the whole picture glowing like a sun or star at whatever distance we stand, and lighting the air between us and it; while many even of the best pictures of Claude must be looked close into to be felt, and lose light

§ 20. *Turner is not so perfect in parts—far more so in the whole.*

[1] [The Napoleon is "War: the Exile and the Rock-Limpet" (1842), No. 529 in the National Gallery; for a description of the picture, see *Notes on the Turner Gallery*, and below, ch. ii. § 9, p. 288. For other references, see in this vol., pp. 297, 364, 422, 474; and *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. xviii. § 24; vol. v. pt. vii. ch. ii. § 16, pt. ix. ch. xi. §§ 30, 31 *sq.*]

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every foot that we retire. The smallest of the three sea-ports in the National Gallery[1] is valuable and right in tone, when we are close to it; but ten yards off, it is all brickdust, offensively and evidently false in its whole hue.

§ 21. *The power in Turner of uniting a number of tones.*

The comparison[2] of Turner with Cuyp and Claude may sound strange in most ears; but this is chiefly because we are not in the habit of analysing and dwelling upon those difficult and daring passages of the modern master which do not at first appeal to our ordinary notions of truth, owing to his habit of uniting two, three, or even more separate tones in the same composition. In this also he strictly follows nature, for wherever climate changes, tone changes, and the climate changes with every 200 feet of elevation, so that the upper clouds are always different in tone from the lower ones; these from the rest of the landscape, and in all probability, some part of the horizon from the rest. And when nature allows this in a high degree, as in her most gorgeous effects she always will, she does not herself impress at once with intensity of tone, as in the deep and quiet yellows of a July evening, but rather with the magnificence and variety of associated colour, in which, if we give time and attention to it, we shall gradually find the solemnity and the depth of twenty tones instead of one. Now, in Turner's power of associating cold with warm light no one has ever approached or even ventured into the same field with him. The old masters, content with one simple tone, sacrificed to its unity all the exquisite gradations and varied touches of relief and change by which nature unites her hours with each other. They give the warmth of the sinking sun, overwhelming all things in its gold, but they did not give those grey passages about the horizon where, seen through its dying light, the cool and the gloom of night gather themselves for their victory. Whether it was in them impotence or judgment, it is not for me to decide. I have only

[1] [No. 5, "A Seaport at Sunset." For another reference, see below, sec. iii. ch. iii. § 8, p. 375.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 begin this section, "I do not doubt the comparison," etc.]

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to point to the daring of Turner in this respect as something to which art affords no matter of comparison, as that in which the mere attempt is, in itself, superiority. Take the evening effect with the Téméraire.[1] That picture will not, at the first glance, deceive as a piece of actual sunlight; but this is because there is in it more than sunlight, because under the blazing veil of vaulted fire which lights the vessel on her last path, there is a blue, deep, desolate hollow of darkness, out of which you can hear the voice of the night wind, and the dull boom of the disturbed sea; because the cold deadly shadows of the twilight are gathering through every sunbeam, and moment by moment as you look, you will fancy some new film and faintness of the night has risen over the vastness of the departing form.

§ 22. *Recapitulation.*

And if, in effects of this kind, time be taken to dwell upon the individual tones, and to study the laws of their reconcilement, there will be found, in the recent Academy pictures of this great artist, a mass of various truth to which nothing can be brought for comparison; which stands not only unrivalled, but uncontended with, and which, when in carrying out it may be inferior to some of the picked passages of the old masters, is so through deliberate choice rather to suggest a multitude of truths than to imitate one, and through a strife with difficulties of effect of which art can afford no parallel example. Nay, in the next chapter, respecting colour, we shall see farther reason for doubting the truth of Claude, Cuyp, and Poussin, in tone,—reason so palpable that if these were all that were to be contended with, I should scarcely have allowed any inferiority in Turner whatsoever;*

* We must not leave the subject of tone without alluding to the works of the late George Barrett, which afford glorious and exalted passages of light; and of John Varley, who, though less truthful in his aim, was frequently deep in his feeling. Some of the sketches of De Wint are also admirable in this respect. As for our oil pictures, the less that is said about them the better. Callcott had the truest aim; but not having any eye for colour, it was impossible for him to succeed in tone.[2]

[1] [For this picture, see above, p. 247 *n.*]

[2] [George Barret, the eminent landscape-painter, 1728–1784. His son, George Barret the younger, one of the first members of the Old Water-Colour Society, 1774–1842. Ruskin refers presumably to the elder; for other references, see below,

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but I allow it, not so much with reference to the deceptive imitations of sunlight, wrought out with desperate exaggerations of shade of the professed landscape painters, as with reference to the glory of Rubens, the glow of Titian, the silver tenderness of Cagliari, and perhaps more than all to the precious and pure passages of intense feeling and heavenly light, holy and undefiled, and glorious with the changeless passion of eternity, which sanctify with their shadeless peace the deep and noble conceptions of the early school of Italy,—of Fra Bartolomeo, Perugino, and the early mind of Raffaelle.

pp. 614, 624, and *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. v. § 15. For other references to Varley (1778–1842), see below, pp. 472 n., 529 n., 625. For Callcott, see above, pp. 191, 266.]

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CHAPTER II[1]

OF TRUTH OF COLOUR

§ 1. Observations on the colour of G. Poussin's La Riccia.

THERE is, in the first room of the National Gallery, a landscape attributed to Gaspar Poussin, called sometimes Aricia, sometimes Le or La Riccia, according to the fancy of catalogue printers.[2] Whether it can be supposed to resemble the ancient Aricia, now La Riccia, close to Albano, I will not take upon me to determine, seeing that most of the towns of these old masters are quite as like one place as another; but, at any rate, it is a town on a hill, wooded with two-and-thirty bushes, of very uniform size, and possessing about the same number of leaves each. These bushes are all painted in with one dull opaque brown, becoming very slightly greenish towards the lights, and discover in one place a bit of rock, which of course would

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 had an earlier paragraph at the beginning of this chapter, as follows:

§ 1. Incompetence of the later critics of Turner's colour.

"There is nothing so high in art but that a scurrile jest can reach it, and often, the greater the work, the easier it is to turn it into ridicule. To appreciate the science of Turner's colour would require the study of a life, but to laugh at it requires little more than the knowledge that yolk of egg is yellow and spinage green—a fund of critical information on which the remarks of most of our leading periodicals have been of late years exclusively based. We shall, however, in spite of the sulphur and treacle criticisms of our Scotch connoisseurs, and the eggs and spinage of our English ones, endeavour to test the works of this great colourist by a knowledge of nature somewhat more extensive than is to be gained by an acquaintance, however familiar, with the apothecary's shop, or the dinner-table."

The references here are to passages in the critiques of Turner's pictures of 1842 in *Blackwood* and the *Athenæum*; see above, pp. xxiv., 17. Turner, it may be remarked, sometimes laughed good-naturedly at himself, and used culinary comparisons. "At a dinner when I was present," says Mr. W. P. Frith, "a salad was offered to Turner, who called the attention of his neighbour at the table (Jones Lloyd, afterwards Lord Overstone) to it in the following words: 'Nice cool green that lettuce, isn't it? and the beetroot pretty red—not quite strong enough; and the mixture, delicate tint of yellow that. Add some mustard, and then you have one of my pictures'" (*My Autobiography and Reminiscences*, 1887, vol. i. p. 131).]

[2] [No. 96. For other references to the picture, see below, pp. 577, 588 *n.*, and *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. ii. § 18.]

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in nature have been cool and grey beside the lustrous hues of foliage, and which, therefore, being moreover completely in shade, is consistently and scientifically painted of a very clear, pretty, and positive brick red, the only thing like colour in the picture. The foreground is a piece of road which, in order to make allowance for its greater nearness, for its being completely in light, and, it may be presumed, for the quantity of vegetation usually present on carriage-roads, is given in a very cool green grey; and the truth of the picture is completed by a number of dots in the sky on the right, with a stalk to them, of a sober and similar brown.[1]

Not long ago, I was slowly descending this very bit of carriage-road, the first turn after you leave Albano,[2] not a little impeded by the worthy successors of the ancient prototypes of Veiento.* It had been wild weather when I left

* "Cæcus adulator . . . .
Dignus Aricinos qui mendicaret ad axes,
Blandaque devexæ jactaret basia rhedæ."[3]

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[1] [It should be remembered by readers now visiting the National Gallery that this picture has been cleaned and varnished (1880) since Ruskin wrote. A similar remark applies to other "old masters" in the Gallery referred to in this book.]

[2] [Ruskin was there on Jan. 6, and again on March 20, 1841. In *Præterita* (ii. ch. iii. § 48), in describing the tour of that year, he refers to this—"perhaps the oftenest quoted"—passage in *Modern Painters*, and cites a few lines from his diary, to show that while at this time he "never drew anything but in pencil outline," he "saw everything first in colour, as it ought to be seen." The full passage in the diary is as follows:—

> "Just beyond [Albano] descended into a hollow with another village on the hill opposite, a most elegant and finished group of church towers and roof, infinitely varied outline against sky, descending by delicious colour and delicate upright leafless sprigs of tree, into a dark rich toned depth of ravine, out of which rose, nearer, and clear against its shade, a grey wall of rock—an absolute miracle for blending of bright lichenous colour; our descending road bordered by bright yellow stumpy trees, leaning over it in heavy masses (with thick trunks covered with ivy and feathery leafage), giving a symmetry to the foreground; their trunks rising, from bold fragments of projecting tiers loaded with vegetation of the richest possible tone, the whole thing for about three minutes of rapidly changing composition absolutely unparalleled in my experience, especially for its total independence of *all* atmospheric effect, being under a grey and unbroken sky with rain as bright as a first-rate Turner. I got quite sick with delight."

(The word "sprigs" was inserted by Ruskin in *Præterita*, for a sketch in the original.) On March 20, on the return journey from Naples, Ruskin again stopped at the spot, and made the drawing (in the collection of Mrs. Cunliffe) which was No. 66 in the Ruskin Exhibition of 1901. "Not quite so fine," he notes this time, "as it seems at the passing glance. . . . Still it is the finest thing I ever saw put together by Nature."]

[3] [Juvenal, iv. 116. But it is a certain Catullus, and not Veiento, who is there

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Rome, and all across the Campagna the clouds were sweeping in sulphurous blue, with a clap of thunder or two, and breaking gleams of sun along the Claudian aqueduct lighting up the infinity of its arches like the bridge of chaos. But as I climbed the long slope of the Alban Mount, the storm swept finally to the north, and the noble outline of the domes of Albano, and graceful darkness of its ilex grove, rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber; the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep palpitating azure, half æther and half dew. The noonday sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia, and their masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it colour, it was conflagration. Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life; each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the grey walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. Every glade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed above it, as sheet-lightning opens in a cloud at sunset; the motionless masses of dark rock—dark though flushed with scarlet lichen, casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hollow with blue mist and fitful sound; and over all, the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that

§ 2. As compared with the actual scene.

described as "a blind sycophant, only fit to beg alms at the wheel's side on the Arician road, and throw coaxing kisses after the chariot as it goes down hill." Aricia was on the Appian road (Horace, *Sat.* i. 5, 1), and beggars were accustomed to take their stand on the hill leading from Albano to Aricia (see notes in Mayor's Juvenal, *l.c.*).]

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have no darkness, and only exist to illumine, were seen in fathomless intervals between the solemn and orbed repose of the stone pines, passing to lose themselves in the last, white, blinding lustre of the measureless line where the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea.[1]

§ 3. *Turner himself is inferior in brilliancy to nature.*

Tell me who is likest this, Poussin or Turner? Not in his most daring and dazzling efforts could Turner himself come near it; but you could not at the time have thought of or remembered the work of any other man as having the remotest hue or resemblance of what you saw. Nor am I speaking of what is uncommon or unnatural; there is no climate, no place, and scarcely an hour, in which nature does not exhibit colour which no mortal effort can imitate or approach. For all our artificial pigments are, even when seen under the same circumstances, dead and lightless beside her living colour; the green of a growing leaf, the scarlet of a fresh flower, no art nor expedient can reach; but in addition to this, nature exhibits her hues under an intensity of sunlight which trebles their brilliancy; while the painter, deprived of this splendid aid, works still with what is actually a grey shadow compared with the force of nature's colour. Take a blade of grass and a scarlet flower, and place them so as to receive sunlight beside the brightest canvas that ever left Turner's easel, and the picture will be extinguished. So far from outfacing nature, he does not, as far as mere vividness of colour goes, one half reach her. But does he use this brilliancy of colour on objects to which it does not properly belong? Let us compare his works in this respect with a few instances from the old masters.

§ 4. *Impossible colours, of Salvator, Titian;*

There is, on the left-hand side of Salvator's Mercury and the Woodman in our National Gallery,[2] something without doubt intended for a rocky mountain, in the middle distance, near enough for all its fissures and crags to be distinctly visible, or, rather, for a great many awkward scratches of the brush over it to be

[1] [§ 2, from "It had been wild weather" to the end, is § 40 in *Frondes Agrestes*.]
[2] [No. 84.]

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visible, which, though not particularly representative either of one thing or another, are without doubt intended to be symbolical of rocks. Now no mountain in full light, and near enough for its details of crag to be seen, is without great variety of delicate colour. Salvator has painted it throughout without one instant of variation; but this, I suppose, is simplicity and generalization;—let it pass: but what is the colour? *Pure sky blue*, without one grain of grey or any modifying hue whatsoever;[1] the same brush which had just given the bluest parts of the sky has been more loaded at the same part of the pallet, and the whole mountain thrown in with unmitigated ultramarine. Now mountains only can become pure blue when there is so much air between us and them that they become mere flat dark shades, every detail being totally lost: they become blue when they become air, and not till then. Consequently this part of Salvator's painting, being of hills perfectly clear and near, with all their details visible, is, as far as colour is concerned, broad bold falsehood, the direct assertion of direct impossibility.

In the whole range of Turner's works, recent or of old date, you will not find an instance of anything near enough to have details visible, painted in sky blue. Wherever Turner gives blue, there he gives atmosphere; it is air, not object. Blue he gives to his sea; so does nature;—blue he gives, sapphire-deep, to his extreme distance; so does nature;—blue he gives to the misty shadows and hollows of his hills; so does nature; but blue he gives *not*,[2] where detail and illumined surface are visible; as he comes into light and character, so he breaks into warmth and varied hue: nor is there in one of his works—and I speak of the Academy pictures especially—one touch of cold colour which is not to be accounted for, and proved right and full of meaning.

I do not say that Salvator's distance is not artist-like; both in that, and in the yet more glaringly false distances of Titian

[1] [For Ruskin's reply to a criticism of this passage, see below, Appendix ii., p. 642.]

[2] [In ed. 1 this passage was differently phrased: "Blue he is, in his sea; so is nature;—blue he is, as a sapphire, in his extreme distance; so is nature;—blue he is, in the misty shadows and hollows of his hills; so is nature; but blue he is *not*," etc.]

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above alluded to,[1] and in hundreds of others of equal boldness of exaggeration, I can take delight, and perhaps should be sorry to see them other than they are; but it is somewhat singular to hear people talking of Turner's exquisite care and watchfulness in colour as false, while they receive such cases of preposterous and audacious fiction with the most generous and simple credulity.

§ 5. *Poussin, and Claude.*

Again, in the upper sky of the picture of Nicholas Poussin, before noticed,[2] the clouds are of a very fine clear olive green, about the same tint as the brightest parts of the trees beneath them. They cannot have altered (or else the trees must have been painted in grey), for the hue is harmonious and well united with the rest of the picture, and the blue and white in the centre of the sky are still fresh and pure. Now a green sky in open and illumined distance is very frequent, and very beautiful; but rich olive-green clouds, as far as I am acquainted with nature, are a piece of colour in which she is not apt to indulge. You will be puzzled to show me such a thing in the recent works of Turner.* Again, take any important group of trees, I do not care whose—Claude's, Salvator's, or Poussin's—with lateral light (that in the Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, or Gaspar's Sacrifice of Isaac, for instance):[3] can it be seriously supposed that those murky

* There is perhaps nothing more characteristic of a great colourist than his power of using greens in strange places without their being felt as such, or at least than a constant preference of green grey to purple grey. And this hue of Poussin's clouds would have been perfectly agreeable and allowable, had there been gold or crimson enough in the rest of the picture to have thrown it into grey. It is only because the lower clouds are pure white and blue, and because the trees are of the same colour as the clouds, that the cloud colour becomes false. There is a fine instance of a sky, green in itself, but turned grey by the opposition of warm colour, in Turner's Devonport with the Dockyards.[4]

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[1] [In the preceding chapter, § 15, p. 268.]

[2] [In the preceding chapter, § 8, p. 263. The picture is "Phocion," No. 40 in the National Gallery. In the 1888 and subsequent eds. "Nicholas" was altered to "Gaspar," apparently under the idea that the picture here referred to is the "La Riccia" (above, § 1); but the "olive green" clouds, etc., are in the "Phocion," not in the "La Riccia."]

[3] [For Claude's "Isaac and Rebecca" (or, "The Mill"), see above, p. 41 n.; for Gaspard Poussin's "Sacrifice of Isaac" (N.G., No. 31), see below, pp. 332, 348, 376.]

[4] [In "England and Wales," No. 8; *cf.* above, p. 266 n., and below, p. 545.]

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browns and melancholy greens are representative of the tints of leaves under full noonday sun?[1] I know that you cannot help looking upon all these pictures as pieces of dark relief against a light wholly proceeding from the distances; but they are nothing of the kind, they are noon and morning effects with full lateral light. Be so kind as to match the colour of a leaf in the sun (the darkest you like) as nearly as you can, and bring your matched colour and set it beside one of these groups of trees, and take a blade of common grass, and set it beside any part of the fullest light of their foregrounds, and then talk about the truth of colour of the old masters!

And let not arguments respecting the sublimity or fidelity of *impression* be brought forward here. I have nothing whatever to do with this at present. I am not talking about what is sublime, but about what is true. People attack Turner on this ground; they never speak of beauty or sublimity with respect to him, but of nature and truth, and let them support their own favourite masters on the same grounds. Perhaps I may have the very deepest veneration for the *feeling* of the old masters; but I must not let it influence me now,—my business is to match colours, not to talk sentiment. Neither let it be said that I am going too much into details, and that general truth may be obtained by local falsehood.[2] Truth is only to be measured by close comparison of actual facts; we may talk for ever about it in generals, and prove nothing. We cannot tell what effect falsehood may produce on this or that person, but we can very well tell what is false and what is not; and if it produce on our senses the effect of truth, that only demonstrates their imperfection and inaccuracy, and need of cultivation. Turner's colour is glaring to one person's

[1] [For Ruskin's reply to a criticism on this passage, see below, Appendix ii., p. 641.]

[2] [After "by local falsehood" ed. 1 continues:—

"It is quite true that in this particular department of art, colour, one error may often be concealed by another, and one falsehood made to look right, by cleverly matching another to it; but that only enables us to be certain, that when we have proved one colour to be false, if it looks right, there must be something else to keep it in countenance, and so we have proved two falsehoods instead of one. And indeed truth is only," etc.]

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sensations, and beautiful to another's. This proves nothing. Poussin's colour is right to one, soot to another. This proves nothing. There is no means of arriving at any conclusion but by close comparison of both with the known and demonstrable hues of nature, and this comparison will invariably turn Claude or Poussin into blackness, and even Turner into grey.

Whatever depth of gloom may seem to invest the objects of a real landscape, yet a window with that landscape seen through it will invariably appear a broad space of light as compared with the shade of the room walls; and this single circumstance may prove to us both the intensity and the diffusion of daylight in open air, and the necessity, if a picture is to be truthful in effect of colour, that it should tell as a broad space of graduated illumination,—not, as do those of the old masters, as a patchwork of black shades. Their works are nature in mourning weeds,—*οὐδ' ἐν ἡλίῳ καθαρῷ τεθραμμένοι, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ συμμιγεῖ σκιᾷ.*[1]

§ 6. Turner's translation of colours.

It is true that there are, here and there, in the Academy pictures, passages in which Turner has translated the unattainable intensity of one tone of colour, into the attainable pitch of a higher one: the golden green, for instance, of intense sunshine on verdure, into pure yellow, because he knows it to be impossible, with any mixture of blue whatsoever, to give faithfully its relative intensity of light; and Turner always will have his light and shade right, whatever it costs him in colour. But he does this in rare cases, and even then over very small spaces; and I should be obliged to his critics if they would go out to some warm mossy green bank in full summer sunshine, and try to reach its tone; and when they find, as find they will, Indian yellow and chrome look dark beside it, let them tell me candidly which is nearer truth,—the gold of Turner, or the mourning and murky olive browns and verdigris greens in which Claude, with the industry and intelligence of a Sèvres

[1] [Plato, *Phaedrus*, 239 C: "brought up not in the clear sunlight, but in a blended shade." Ruskin elsewhere applies the same phrase to the twilight of Sir L. Alma-Tadema's pictures (*Art of England*, § 79). The paragraph, "Whatever depth of gloom . . . σκιᾷ," did not appear in the first ed.]

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china painter, drags the laborious bramble leaves over his childish foreground.

§ 7. *Notice of effects in which no brilliancy of art can even approach that of reality.*

But it is singular enough that the chief attacks on Turner for overcharged brilliancy are made, not when there could by any possibility be any chance of his outstepping nature, but when he has taken subjects which no colours of earth could ever vie with or reach, such, for instance, as his sunsets among the high clouds. When I come to speak of skies, I shall point out what divisions, proportioned to their elevation, exist in the character of clouds. It is the highest region, that exclusively characterized by white, filmy, multitudinous, and quiet clouds, arranged in bars, or streaks, or flakes, of which I speak at present; a region which no landscape painters have ever made one effort to represent, except Rubens and Turner, the latter taking it for his most favourite and frequent study. Now we have been speaking hitherto of what is constant and necessary in nature, of the ordinary effects of daylight on ordinary colours, and we repeat again, that no gorgeousness of the pallet can reach even these. But it is a widely different thing when nature herself takes a colouring fit, and does something extraordinary, something really to exhibit her power. She has a thousand ways and means of rising above herself, but incomparably the noblest manifestations of her capability of colour are in these sunsets among the high clouds. I speak especially of the moment before the sun sinks, when his light turns pure rose-colour, and when this light falls upon a zenith covered with countless cloud-forms of inconceivable delicacy, threads and flakes of vapour, which would in common daylight be pure snow-white, and which give therefore fair field to the tone of light. There is then no limit to the multitude, and no check to the intensity, of the hues assumed. The whole sky from the zenith to the horizon becomes one molten mantling sea of colour and fire; every black bar turns into massy gold, every ripple and wave into unsullied shadowless crimson, and purple, and scarlet, and colours for which there are no words in

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language, and no ideas in the mind,—things which can only be conceived while they are visible; the intense hollow blue of the upper sky melting through it all, showing here deep, and pure, and lightless; there, modulated by the filmy formless body of the transparent vapour, till it is lost imperceptibly in its crimson and gold. Now there is no connection, no one link of association or resemblance, between those skies and the work of any mortal hand but Turner's. He alone has followed nature in these her highest efforts; he follows her faithfully, but far behind; follows at such a distance below her intensity that the Napoleon of last year's Exhibition, and the Téméraire of the year before, would look colourless and cold if the eye came upon them after one of nature's sunsets among the high clouds. But there are a thousand reasons why this should not be believed. The concurrence of circumstances necessary to produce the sunsets of which I speak does not take place above five or six times in a summer, and then only for a space of from five to ten minutes, just as the sun reaches the horizon. Considering how seldom people think of looking for a sunset at all, and how seldom, if they do, they are in a position from which it can be fully seen, the chances that their attention should be awake, and their position favourable, during these few flying instants of the year, are almost as nothing.[1] What can the citizen, who can see

§ 8. Reasons for the usual incredulity of the observer with respect to their representation.

[1] [The story is well known of the lady who said to Turner that she had never seen the effect recorded in one of his pictures. "No, ma'am," he replied, "but don't you wish you had?" An interesting anecdote in this connection, which would have pleased Ruskin, is told by Sir William Napier's daughter. When Admiral Sir Edward Codrington was once in the Channel Islands, he went with Napier, then Governor of Guernsey, in an open boat to Sark. "There was a beautiful golden sunset on a calm summer sea, just crisped with the ripple of an evening breeze. Sir Edward was criticising Turner as extravagant and unnatural, and Napier said that was thought so because few had observed Nature so closely under so many aspects and tried to paint some of the rarer ones—yet not so rare either, were observation keener. Sir Edward said, 'Well, General, but now those reds, those blazing reds—you must allow those are overdone.' My father looked round, and, pointing with his hand to the sea towards the east, said, 'Look there!' As every little ripple rose, it was a triangle of burning crimson sheen from the red sunset-light upon it, of a brilliancy not even Turner himself could equal in his most highly coloured picture. The whole broad sea was a blaze of those burning crimson triangles, all playing into each other, and just parting and showing their forms again as the miniature billows rose and fell. 'Well, well,' said Sir Edward, 'I suppose I must give up the reds, but what will you say to his yellows? Surely

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only the red light on the canvas of the waggon at the end of the street, and the crimson colour of the bricks of his neighbour's chimney, know of the flood of fire which deluges the sky from the horizon to the zenith? What can even the quiet inhabitant of the English lowlands, whose scene for the manifestation of the fire of heaven is limited to the tops of hayricks, and the rooks' nests in the old elm trees, know of the mighty passages of splendour which are tossed from Alp to Alp over the azure of a thousand miles of champaign? Even granting the constant vigour of observation, and supposing the possession of such impossible knowledge, it needs but a moment's reflection to prove how incapable the memory is of retaining for any time the distinct image of the sources even of its most vivid impressions. What recollection have we of the sunsets which delighted us last year? We may know that they were magnificent, or glowing, but no distinct image of colour or form is retained—nothing of whose *degree* (for the great difficulty with the memory is to retain, not facts, but *degrees* of fact) we could be so certain as to say of anything now presented to us, that it is like it. If we did say so, we should be wrong; for we may be quite certain that the energy of an impression fades from the memory, and becomes more and more indistinct every day; and thus we compare a faded and indistinct image with the decision and certainty of one present to the senses. How constantly do we affirm that the thunderstorm of last week was the most terrible one we ever saw in our lives, because

they are beyond everything!' 'Look there!' said my father, pointing to the sea on the western side of our boat, between us and the setting sun; every triangular wave there, as the ripples rose, was in a yellow flame, as bright as the other was red, and glittering like millions of topaz lights. Sir Edward Codrington laughed kindly and admiringly, and said, 'Well! I must give in—I've no more to say; you and Turner have observed Nature more closely than I have'" (*Life of Sir William Napier*, ii. 489). Ruskin in one of his MS. books has noted a similar remark in Johnston's *Travels in Southern Abyssinia* (i. 74: "all the azure and gold of . . . Turner was realized, and I silently acknowledged the injustice of my . . . judgment in considering his pictures . . . not natural"). These anecdotes may be paralleled by another which is within the recollection of one of the editors, when paying his first visit to Brantwood in 1875. On his arrival Ruskin took him up on to the hillside behind the house to see the view over the lake. The day was brilliant, and across the lake came a boat rowed by a soldier in his red jacket. "There," said Ruskin, calling attention to the point of colour, "if it had been Turner, they would have said it was absurd."]

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we compare it, not with the thunderstorm of last year, but with the faded and feeble recollection of it! And so, when we enter an Exhibition, as we have no definite standard of truth before us, our feelings are toned down and subdued to the quietness of colour, which is all that human power can ordinarily attain to; and when we turn to a piece of higher and closer truth, approaching the pitch of the colour of nature, but to which we are not guided, as we should be in nature, by corresponding gradations of light everywhere around us, but which is isolated and cut off suddenly by a frame and a wall, and surrounded by darkness and coldness, what can we expect but that it should surprise and shock the feelings?

§ 9. Colour of the "Napoleon."

Suppose where the "Napoleon"[1] hung in the Academy, there could have been left, instead, an opening in the wall, and through that opening, in the midst of the obscurity of the dim room and the smoke-laden atmosphere, there could suddenly have been poured the full glory of a tropical sunset, reverberated from the sea; how would you have shrunk, blinded, from its scarlet and intolerable lightnings! What picture in the room would not have been blackness after it? And why then do you blame Turner because he dazzles you? Does not the falsehood rest with those who do *not*? There was not one hue in this whole picture which was not far below what nature would have used in the same circumstances, nor was there one inharmonious or at variance with the rest. The stormy blood-red of the horizon, the scarlet of the breaking sunlight, the rich crimson browns of the wet and illumined sea-weed, the pure gold and purple of the upper sky, and, shed through it all, the deep passage of solemn blue, where the cold moonlight fell on one pensive spot of the limitless shore,—all were given with harmony as perfect as their colour was intense; and if, instead of passing, as I doubt not you did, in the hurry of your unreflecting prejudice, you had paused but so much as one quarter of an hour before the picture, you would have found the sense of air and space blended with every line,

[1] [See above, preceding chapter, § 20, p. 273.]

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and breathing in every cloud, and every colour instinct and radiant with visible, glowing, absorbing light.

It is to be observed, however, in general, that wherever in brilliant effects of this kind, we approach to anything like a true statement of nature's colour, there must yet be a distinct difference in the impression we convey, because we cannot approach her *light*. All such hues are usually given by her with an accompanying intensity of sunbeams which dazzles and overpowers the eye, so that it cannot rest on the actual colours, nor understand what they are; and hence in art, in rendering all effects of this kind, there must be a want of the ideas of *imitation*, which are the great source of enjoyment to the ordinary observer; because we can only give one series of truths, those of colour, and are unable to give the accompanying truths of light; so that the more true we are in colour, the greater, ordinarily, will be the discrepancy felt between the intensity of hue and the feebleness of light.[1] But the painter who really loves nature will not, on this account, give you a faded and feeble image, which indeed may appear to you to be right, because your feelings can detect no discrepancy in its parts, but which he knows to derive its apparent truth from a systematized falsehood. No; he will make you understand and feel that art *cannot* imitate nature; that where it appears to do so, it must malign her and mock her. He will give you, or state to you, such truths as are in his power, completely and perfectly; and those which he cannot give, he will leave to your imagination. If you are acquainted with nature, you will know all he has given to be true, and you will supply from your memory and from your heart that light which he cannot give. If you are unacquainted with nature, seek elsewhere for whatever may happen to satisfy your feelings; but do not ask for the truth which you would not acknowledge and could not enjoy.[2]

§ 10. Necessary discrepancy between the attainable brilliancy of colour and light.

Nevertheless the aim and struggle of the artist must

[1] [Doubly marked by Ruskin in his copy for revision.]
[2] [For "do not ask . . . enjoy," eds. 1 and 2 read, "do not talk about truth."]

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always be to do away with this discrepancy as far as the powers of art admit, not by lowering his colour, but by increasing his light. And it is indeed by this that the works of Turner are peculiarly distinguished from those of all other colourists, by the dazzling intensity, namely, of the light which he sheds through every hue, and which, far more than their brilliant colour, is the real source of their overpowering effect upon the eye, an effect so *reasonably* made the subject of perpetual animadversion; as if the sun which they represent, were quite a quiet, and subdued, and gentle, and manageable luminary, and never dazzled anybody, under any circumstances whatsoever. I am fond of standing by a bright Turner in the Academy, to listen to the unintentional compliments of the crowd—"What a glaring thing!" "I declare I can't look at it!" "Don't it hurt your eyes?"—expressed as if they were in the constant habit of looking the sun full in the face with the most perfect comfort and entire facility of vision. It is curious after hearing people malign some of Turner's noble passages of light, to pass to some really ungrammatical and false picture of the old masters, in which we have colour given *without* light. Take, for instance, the landscape attributed to Rubens, No. 175, in the Dulwich Gallery.[1] I never have spoken, and I never will speak, of Rubens but with the most reverential feeling;[2] and whatever imperfections in his art may have resulted from his unfortunate want of seriousness and incapability of true passion, his calibre of mind was originally such that I believe the world may see another Titian and another Raffaelle, before it sees another Rubens. But I have before alluded to the violent license he occasionally assumes; and there is an instance of it in this picture apposite to the immediate question.[3] The sudden streak and circle of yellow

§ 11. *The discrepancy less in Turner than in other colourists.*

§ 12. *Its great extent in a landscape attributed to Rubens.*

[1] [Now No. 132, "Landscape with a Shepherd and his Flock."]

[2] [But see above, Introduction, p. xxi.]

[3] [For "But I have . . . sudden streak," eds. 1 and 2 read :—

"Whenever, therefore, I see anything attributed to him artistically wrong, or testifying a want of knowledge of nature, or of feeling for colour, I become

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and crimson in the middle of the sky of that picture, being the occurrence of a fragment of a sunset colour in pure daylight, and in perfect isolation, while at the same time it is rather darker, when translated into light and shade, than brighter than the rest of the sky, is a case of such bold absurdity, come from whose pencil it may, that if every error which Turner has fallen into in the whole course of his life were concentrated into one, that one would not equal it; and as our connoisseurs gaze upon this with never-ending approbation, we must not be surprised that the accurate perceptions which thus take delight in pure fiction, should consistently be disgusted by Turner's fidelity and truth.

§ 13. *Turner scarcely ever uses pure or vivid colour.*

Hitherto, however, we have been speaking of vividness of pure colour, and showing that it is used by Turner only where nature uses it, and in less degree. But we have hitherto, therefore, been speaking of a most limited and uncharacteristic portion of his works; for Turner, like all great colourists, is distinguished not more for his power of dazzling and overwhelming the eye with intensity of effect, than for his power of doing so by the use of subdued and gentle means. There is no man living more cautious and sparing in the use of pure colour than Turner. To say that he never perpetrates anything like the blue excrescences of foreground, or hills *shot* like a housekeeper's best silk gown, with blue and red, which certain of our celebrated artists consider the essence of the sublime, would be but a poor compliment; I might as well praise the portraits of Titian because they have not the grimace and paint of a clown in a pantomime: but I do say,[1] and say with confidence, that there is scarcely a landscape artist of the present day, however sober and lightless their effects may look, who

instantly incredulous; and if I ever advance anything affirmed to be his as such, it is not so much under the idea that it can be his, as to show what a great name can impose upon the public. The landscape I speak of has, beyond a doubt, high qualities in it; I can scarcely make up my mind whether to like it or not, but at any rate it is something which the public are in the habit of admiring and taking upon trust to any extent. Now the sudden streak . . ."]

[1] [From here down to Cotytto is doubly marked by Ruskin in his copy for revision.]

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does not employ more pure and raw colour than Turner; and that the ordinary tinsel and trash, or rather vicious and perilous stuff,[1] according to the power of the mind producing it, with which the walls of our Academy are half covered, disgracing in weak hands, or in more powerful degrading and corrupting, our whole school of art, is based on a system of colour beside which Turner's is as Vesta to Cotytto—the chastity of fire to the foulness of earth. Every picture of this great colourist has, in one or two parts of it (keynotes of the whole), points where the system of each individual colour is concentrated by a single stroke, as pure as it can come from the pallet; but throughout the great space and extent of even the most brilliant of his works, there will not be found a raw colour; that is to say, there is no warmth which has not grey in it, and no blue which has not warmth in it; and the tints in which he most excels and distances all other men, the most cherished and inimitable portions of his colour, are, as with all perfect colourists they must be, his greys.[2]

It is instructive in this respect, to compare the sky of the Mercury and Argus[3] with the various illustrations of the serenity, space, and sublimity naturally inherent in blue and pink, of which every year's Exhibition brings forward enough, and to spare. In the Mercury and Argus, the pale and vaporous blue of the heated sky is broken with grey and pearly white, the gold colour of the light warming it more or less as it approaches or retires from the sun; but, throughout, there is not a grain of pure blue; all is subdued and warmed at the same time by the mingling grey and gold, up to the very zenith, where, breaking through the flaky mist, the transparent and deep azure of the sky is expressed with a single crumbling

[1] [*Macbeth*, v. 3. For Cotytto, the goddess of debauchery, see Juvenal, ii. 91.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 number the following paragraph "[§ 15. His great tenderness in all large spaces of colour]," and begin it as follows:—

> "And it is, perhaps, herein that the chief beauty, excellence, and truth of Turner's colour, as distinguished from the absurd, futile, and fatal efforts which have been made to imitate it, chiefly lies. For Nature, in the same way, never uses raw colour; there is a tenderness and subdued tone about her purest hues, and a warmth, glow, and light in her soberest. It is instructive . . ."]

[3] [For other references to this picture, see above, p. 264 n.]

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touch; the keynote of the whole is given, and every part of it passes at once far into glowing and aërial space. The reader can scarcely fail to remember at once sundry works, in contradistinction to this, with great names attached to them, in which the sky is a sheer piece of plumber's and glazier's work, and should be valued per yard, with heavy extra charge for ultramarine.[1]

§ 14. *The basis of grey, under all his vivid hues.*

Throughout the works of Turner, the same truthful principle of delicate and subdued colour is carried out with a care and labour of which it is difficult to form a conception. He gives a dash of pure white for his highest light; but all the other whites of his picture are pearled down with grey or gold. He gives a fold of pure crimson to the drapery of his nearest figure, but all his other crimsons will be deepened with black, or warmed with yellow. In one deep reflection of his distant sea, we catch a trace of the purest blue, but all the rest is palpitating with a varied and delicate gradation of harmonized tint, which indeed looks vivid blue as a mass, but is only so by opposition. It is the most difficult, the most rare thing, to find in his works a definite space, however small, of unconnected colour; that is, either of a blue which has nothing to connect it with the warmth, or of a warm colour, which has nothing to connect it with the greys of the whole; and the result is, that there is a general system and under-current of grey pervading the whole of his colour, out of which his highest lights, and those local touches of pure colour, which are, as I said before, the keynotes of the picture, flash with the peculiar brilliancy and intensity in which he stands alone.

Intimately associated with this toning down and connection of the colours actually used, is his inimitable power of varying and blending them, so as never to give a quarter of an

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 conclude this paragraph thus:—
"ultramarine; skies, in which the raw, meaningless colour is shaded steadily and perseveringly down, passing through the pink into the yellow as a young lady shades her worsted, to the successful production of a very handsome oil-cloth, but certainly not of a picture.
"But throughout . . ."]

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inch of canvas without a change in it, a melody as well as a harmony of one kind or another. Observe, I am not at present speaking of this as artistical or desirable in itself, not as a characteristic of the great colourist, but as the aim of the simple follower of nature. For it is strange to see how marvellously nature varies the most general and simple of her tones. A mass of mountain seen against the light, may at first appear all of one blue; and so it is, blue as a whole, by comparison with other parts of the landscape. But look how that blue is made up. There are black shadows in it under the crags, there are green shadows along the turf, there are grey half-lights upon the rocks, there are faint touches of stealthy warmth and cautious light along their edges; every bush, every stone, every tuft of moss has its voice in the matter, and joins with individual character in the universal will. Who is there who can do this as Turner will? The old masters would have settled the matter at once with a transparent, agreeable, but monotonous grey. Many among the moderns would probably be equally monotonous with absurd and false colours. Turner only would give the uncertainty; the palpitating, perpetual change; the subjection of all to a great influence, without one part or portion being lost or merged in it; the unity of action with infinity of agent. And I wish to insist on this the more particularly, because it is one of the eternal principles of nature, that she will not have one line or colour, nor one portion or atom of space, without a change in it. There is not one of her shadows, tints, or lines that is not in a state of perpetual variation: I do not mean in time, but in space. There is not a leaf in the world which has the *same colour* visible over its whole surface; it has a white high light somewhere; and in proportion as it curves to or from that focus, the colour is brighter or greyer. Pick up a common flint from the roadside, and count, if you can, its changes and hues of colour. Every bit of bare ground under your feet has in it a thousand such; the grey pebbles, the warm ochre, the green of incipient vegetation, the greys

§ 15. The variety and fulness even of his most simple tones.

§ 16. Following the infinite and unapproachable variety of nature.

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and blacks of its reflexes and shadows, might keep a painter at work for a month, if he were obliged to follow them touch for touch: how much more when the same infinity of change is carried out with vastness of object and space. The extreme of distance may appear at first monotonous; but the least examination will show it to be full of every kind of change; that its outlines are perpetually melting and appearing again, —sharp here, vague there,—now lost altogether, now just hinted and still confused among each other; and so for ever in a state and necessity of change. Hence, wherever in a painting we have unvaried colour extended even over a small space, there is falsehood. Nothing can be natural which is monotonous; nothing true which only tells one story. The brown foreground and rocks of Claude's Sinon before Priam[1] are as false as colour can be: first, because there never was such a brown under sunlight, for even the sand and cinders (volcanic tufa) about Naples, granting that he had studied from these ugliest of all formations, are, where they are fresh fractured, golden and lustrous in full light, compared to these ideals of crag, and become, like all other rocks, quiet and grey when weathered; and secondly, because no rock that ever nature stained is without its countless breaking tints of varied vegetation. And even Stanfield, master as he is of rock form, is apt in the same way to give us here and there a little bit of mud, instead of stone.[2]

What I am next about to say with respect to Turner's colour, I should wish to be received with caution, as it admits

[1] [Called also "David at the Cave of Adullam," No. 6 in the National Gallery; for other references to the picture, see below, pp. 437, 581, and *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xviii. § 27.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 conclude this paragraph thus:—

"... stone; while no artist, dead or living, except Turner, has ever attained the constant and perfect realization of the great principle of nature—that there shall be nothing without change: with him, and with him only, every individual stroke of the brush has in itself graduation and degrees of colour; and a visible space of monotony is a physical impossibility. Every part is abundant and perfect in itself, though still a member of the great whole; and every square inch contains in itself a system of colour and light, as complete, as studied, and as wonderful as the great arrangement of that to which it is subordinate.

"What I am next about," etc.]

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of dispute. I think that the first approach to viciousness of colour in any master is commonly indicated chiefly by a prevalence of purple, and an absence of yellow. I think nature mixes yellow with almost every one of her hues, never, or very rarely, using red without it, but frequently using yellow with scarcely any red; and I believe it will be in consequence found that her favourite opposition, that which generally characterizes and gives tone to her colour, is yellow and black, passing, as it retires, into white and blue. It is beyond dispute that the great fundamental opposition of Rubens is yellow and black; and, that on this, concentrated in one part of the picture, and modified in various greys throughout, chiefly depend the tones of all his finest works. And in Titian, though there is a far greater tendency to the purple than in Rubens, I believe no red is ever mixed with the pure blue, or glazed over it, which has not in it a modifying quantity of yellow. At all events, I am nearly certain that whatever rich and pure purples are introduced locally, by the great colourists, nothing is so destructive of all fine colour as the slightest tendency to purple in general tone; and I am equally certain that Turner is distinguished from all the vicious colourists of the present day, by the foundation of all his tones being black, yellow, and the intermediate greys, while the tendency of our common glare-seekers is invariably to pure, cold, impossible purples. So fond, indeed, is Turner of black and yellow, that he has given us more than one composition, both drawings and paintings, based on these two colours alone, of which the magnificent Quilleboeuf, which I consider one of the most perfect pieces of simple colour existing, is a most striking example;[1] and I think that where, as in some of the late Venices, there has been something like a marked appearance of purple tones, even though exquisitely corrected by vivid orange and warm green in the foreground, the general colour has not been so perfect or truthful: my

§ 17. His dislike of purple, and fondness for the opposition of yellow and black. The principles of nature in this respect.

[1] [Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1833; now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.]

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own feelings would always guide me rather to the warm greys of such pictures as the Snow Storm, or the glowing scarlet and gold of the Napoleon and Slave Ship.[1] But I do not insist at present on this part of the subject, as being perhaps more proper for future examination, when we are considering the ideal of colour.

§ 18. *His early works are false in colour.*

The above remarks have been made entirely with reference to the recent Academy pictures, which have been chiefly attacked for their colour. I by no means intend them to apply to the early works of Turner, those which the enlightened newspaper critics are perpetually talking about as characteristic of a time when Turner was "really great." He is, and was, really great, from the time when he first could hold a brush, but he never was so great as he is now.[2] The Crossing the Brook,[3] glorious as it is as a composition, and perfect in all that is most desirable and most ennobling in art, is scarcely to be looked upon as a piece of colour; it is an agreeable, cool, grey rendering of space and form, but it is not colour; if it be regarded as such, it is thoroughly false and vapid, and very far inferior to the tones of the same kind given by Claude. The reddish brown in the foreground of the Fall of Carthage is, as far as I am competent to judge, crude, sunless, and in every way wrong; and both this picture, and the Building of Carthage, though this latter is far the finer of the two, are quite unworthy of Turner as a colourist.[4]

§ 19. *His drawings invariably perfect.*

Not so with the drawings; these, countless as they are, from the earliest to the latest, though presenting an unbroken chain of increasing difficulty overcome and truth illustrated, are all, according to their aim, equally faultless as to colour. Whatever we have hitherto said, applies to them in its fullest extent; though each, being generally the realization of some effect actually

[1] [For various "late Venices," see above, pp. 250–251; for the "Snow Storm," p. 571 n.; "Napoleon," p. 273; the "Slave Ship," p. 571.]
[2] [*Cf.* above, pp. xxxiii. n., 53, and below, p. 654 n.]
[3] [*Cf.* above, p. 241.]
[4] [For the two Carthages, see above, p. 241.]

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seen, and realized but once, requires almost a separate essay. As a class, they are far quieter and chaster than the Academy pictures,[1] and, were they better known, might enable our connoisseurs to form a somewhat more accurate judgment of the intense study of nature on which all Turner's colour is based.[2]

One point only remains to be noted respecting his system of colour generally—its entire subordination to light and

[1] [See also *Notes on the Turner Gallery* (preface and notes on 2nd and 3rd periods), where the same opinion is expressed.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 here proceed with a considerable additional passage as follows :—

"... colour is based, but it would be absurd at present to occupy more time with so inexhaustible a subject; the colour of these inimitable drawings must be considered when we examine them individually, not separated from what it illustrates. Taken generally, the chief characteristics of Turner's colour, whether in drawings or paintings, considered only with respect to truth, and without reference to composition or beauty, of which at present we can take no cognizance, are those above pointed out, which we shall briefly recapitulate.

§ 22. The perfection and importance of his greys. Recapitulation.

"1. Prevalence, variety, value, and exquisite composition of greys. The grey tones are, in the drawings especially, the most wonderful as well as the most valuable portions of the whole picture. Some of the very first-rate drawings are merely harmonies of different kinds of grey: 'Long Ships lighthouse, Land's End,' for instance. Several appear to have been drawn entirely with modulated greys first, and then sparingly heightened with colour on the lights; but whatever the subject, and however brilliant the effect, the grey tones are the foundation of all its beauty.

"2. Refinement, delicacy, and uncertainty in all colours whatsoever. Positive colour is, as I before said, the rarest thing imaginable in Turner's works, and the exquisite refinement with which variety of hue is carried into his feeblest tints is altogether unparalleled in art. The drawing of Colchester, in the England series, is an example of this delicacy and fulness of tint together, with which nothing but nature can be compared. But I have before me while I write a drawing of the most vigorous and powerful colour, with concentrated aërial blue opposed to orange and crimson. I should have fancied at a little distance, that a cake of ultramarine had been used pure upon it. But, when I look close, I discover that all which looks blue in effect is in reality a changeful grey, with black and green in it, and bluer tones breaking through here and there more or less decisively, but without one grain or touch of pure blue in the whole picture, except on a figure in the foreground, nor one grain nor touch of any colour whatsoever, of which it is possible to say what it is, or how many are united in it. Such will invariably be found the case, even with the most brilliant and daring of Turner's systems of colour.

"3. Dislike of purple, and fondness for opposition of yellow and black, or clear blue and white.

§ 23 (the same as § 20 in later editions).

"4. Entire subjection of the whole system of colour to that of chiaroscuro. I have not before noticed this, because I wished to show how true and faithful Turner's colour is, as such, without reference to any associated principles. But the perfection and consummation of its truth rests in its subordination to light and shade—a subordination ..."]

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shade—a subordination which there is no need to prove here, as every engraving from his works (and few are unengraved) is sufficient demonstration of it. I have before shown the inferiority and unimportance in nature of colour, as a truth, compared with light and shade. That inferiority is maintained and asserted by all really great works of colour; but most by Turner's, as their colour is most intense. Whatever brilliancy he may choose to assume, is subjected to an inviolable law of chiaroscuro, from which there is no appeal. No richness nor depth of tint is considered of value enough to atone for the loss of one particle of arranged light. No brilliancy of hue is permitted to interfere with the depth of a determined shadow. And hence it is, that while engravings from works far less splendid in colour are often vapid and cold, because the little colour employed has not been rightly based on light and shade, an engraving from Turner is always beautiful and forcible in proportion as the colour of the original has been intense, and never in a single instance has failed to express the picture as a perfect composition.* Powerful and captivating

§ 20. *The subjection of his system of colour to that of chiaroscuro.*

* This is saying too much; for it not unfrequently happens that the light and shade of the original is lost in the engraving, the effect of which is afterwards partially recovered, with the aid of the artist himself, by introductions of new features. Sometimes, when a drawing depends chiefly on colour, the engraver gets unavoidably embarrassed, and must be assisted by some change or exaggeration of the effect: but the more frequent case is, that the engraver's difficulties result merely from his inattention to, or wilful deviations from, his original; and that the artist is obliged to assist him by such expedients as the error itself suggests. Not unfrequently in reviewing a plate, as very constantly in reviewing a picture after some time has elapsed since its completion, even the painter is liable to make unnecessary or hurtful changes. In the plate of the Old Téméraire, lately published in Finden's Gallery,[1] I do not know whether it was Turner or the engraver who broke up the water into sparkling ripple, but it was a grievous mistake, and has destroyed the whole dignity and value of the conception. The flash of lightning in the Winchelsea of the England series[2] does not exist in the original; it is put in to withdraw the attention of the spectator from the sky, which the engraver destroyed.

There is an unfortunate persuasion among modern engravers that colour

[1] [Finden's *Royal Gallery of British Art* (1838–40) did not, however, contain the "Old Téméraire." The plate of this picture, engraved by J. T. Willmore, was published by T. Hogarth in 1845.]

[2] [Engraved by J. Henshall, part 10.]

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and faithful as his colour is, it is the least important of all his excellences, because it is the least important feature of

can be expressed by particular characters of line, and in the endeavour to distinguish by different lines different colours of equal depth, they frequently lose the whole system of light and shade. It will hardly be credited that the piece of foreground on the left of Turner's Modern Italy, represented in the Art Union engraving[1] as nearly coal black, is, in the original, of a pale warm grey, hardly darker than the sky. All attempt to record colour in engraving is heraldry out of its place; the engraver has no power beyond that of expressing transparency or opacity by greater or less openness of line, for the same depth of tint is producible by lines with very different intervals.

Texture of surface is only in a measure in the power of the steel, and ought not to be laboriously sought after; nature's surfaces are distinguished more by form than texture; a stone is often smoother than a leaf; but if texture is to be given, let the engraver at least be sure that he knows what the texture of the object actually is, and how to represent it. The leaves in the foreground of the engraved Mercury and Argus have all of them three or four black lines across them. What sort of leaf texture is supposed to be represented by these? The stones in the foreground of Turner's Llanthony received from the artist the powdery texture of sandstone; the engraver covered them with contorted lines and turned them into old timber.[2]

A still more fatal cause of failure is the practice of making out or finishing what the artist left incomplete. In the England plate of Dudley,[3] there are two offensive blank windows in the large building with the chimney on the left. These are engraver's improvements; in the original they are barely traceable, their lines being excessively faint and tremulous as with the movement of heated air between them and the spectator: their vulgarity is thus taken away, and the whole building left in one grand unbroken mass. It is almost impossible to break engravers of this unfortunate habit. I have even heard of their taking journeys of some distance in order to obtain knowledge of the details which the artist intentionally omitted; and the evil will necessarily continue until they receive something like legitimate artistical education. In one or two instances, however, particularly in small plates, they have shown great feeling; the plates of Miller (especially those of the Turner illustrations to Scott) are in most instances perfect and beautiful interpretations of the originals; so those of Goodall in Rogers's works, and Cousens's in the Rivers of France; those of the Yorkshire series are also very valuable, though singularly inferior to the drawings. But none, even of these men, appear capable of producing a large plate. They have no knowledge of the means of rendering their lines vital or valuable; cross-hatching stands for everything; and inexcusably, for though we cannot expect every engraver to etch like Rembrandt or Albert Dürer, or every woodcutter to draw like Titian, at least something of the system and power of the grand works of

[1] [Engraved by J. T. Willmore.]
[2] ["England and Wales," part 20; engraved by J. T. Willmore.]
[3] [Engraved by R. Wallis; *cf.* above, p. 266.]

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nature. Were it necessary,[1] rather than lose one line of his forms, or one ray of his sunshine, he would, I apprehend, be content to paint in black and white to the end of his life. It is by mistaking the shadow for the substance, and aiming at the brilliancy and the fire, without perceiving of what deep-studied shade and inimitable form it is at once the result and the illustration, that the host of his imitators sink into deserved disgrace.[2] With him, the hue is a beautiful auxiliary in working out the great impression to be conveyed, but is not the chief source[3] of that impression; it is little more than a visible melody, given to raise and assist the mind in the reception of nobler ideas,—as sacred passages of sweet sound, to prepare the feelings for the reading of the mysteries of God.

those men might be preserved, and some mind and meaning stolen into the reticulation of the restless modern lines.[4]

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[1] [For "Were it necessary," eds. 1, 2, 3, and 4 read, "He paints in colour, but he thinks in light and shade; and were it necessary . . ."]

[2] [Here eds. 1 and 2 continue:—

> "For no colour *can* be beautiful, unless it is subordinate; it cannot take the lead without perishing—in superseding the claims of other excellences, it annihilates its own. To say that the chief excellence of a picture is its colour, is to say that its colour is imperfect. In all truly great painters, and in Turner's more than all, the hue . . ."

Eds. 3 and 4 read, "deserved disgrace. With him, as with all the greatest painters, and in Turner's [*sic*] more than all, the hue . . ."]

[3] [For "the chief source," eds. 1–4 read, "the source nor the essence."]

[4] [This footnote was not in eds. 1 and 2. For some interesting remarks on Turner and his engravers, see appendix by Marcus B. Huish to the illustrated edition of Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner;* and on the same subject, Ruskin's own "Notes respecting Future Uses of Engravings" in that catalogue. Ruskin's appreciation (or otherwise) of several engravers of the time has been given in Vol. II. p. xlii. *n.*]

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CHAPTER III

OF TRUTH OF CHIAROSCURO[1]

[1] [In one of the drafts of this chapter, Ruskin prefixed "a few plain facts" and definitions, which may be useful to some readers:—

"That part of any object which fronts the light fully, receiving it at right angles, is the most luminous part of that object, and whether it be, as in a sphere, a mere point, or as it may be in a cube, a whole side, it is called by artists the High Light. Of the other parts of the object—those which are turned towards the light—those are the more luminous which are more turned towards it, and the less luminous which receive it more obliquely. And the degree of light is in exact proportion to the greatness of the angle at which it meets the plane of the object. And the space of any object which is thus indirectly turned towards the light, whether more or less (and there is every degree of luminousness in it), is generally called by artists the Half Light.

"That part of an object which is turned away from the light, whether more or less, is, as far as the direct light is concerned, equal in it everywhere in its degree of shade, and is called by artists the Dark Side.

"That part of an object from which the light is intercepted by some intermediate object—whether a part of itself, or of any other object, is the darkest part of an object, and is called by artists the Shadow.

"Be so kind, on the first bright, sunny day after you have read this, as to look for a white [-washed ?] cottage, on one side of which the sun falls as directly as may be—but so as yet to get slightly and obliquely at another side. On the high light you will find that you cannot see the projecting granulation, but in the oblique light you can see every pebble separately. Whatever detail or projections are on the high light, as the sun penetrates into every chink and cranny of them, can cast no shadows, and have no dark sides—and, therefore, are indistinctly and imperfectly seen, and indeed, unless very large and important, are not seen at all; whence arises the general rule. There can be no detail on the high light. It is all blaze. But whatever projections and details exist on the surface turned obliquely to the light, each, however small, has its dark side and shadow, and every one is seen, more and more distinctly as the object is turned more and more from the light. The result of this is, that as every object not polished has more or less of texture on its surface, and nearly all have roughness and projections, and detail in some degree, a general tone of shadow is obtained on these oblique surfaces far deeper than could be accounted for by the mere fact of the oblique fall of the light, and they sink, practically, into what artists call Middle Tint. Again, the Dark Side—though entirely inaccessible to the direct light—is very strongly affected by the reflected light, which as it were fills the whole atmosphere, and illuminates every object open and exposed to it; and it is also very often so energetically illumined by accidental lights that its mass is broken up, and it usually becomes also merged in what artists call Middle Tint. But that part of it which is accidentally Shadow is usually, by its position, inaccessible even to the reflected light, and always more inaccessible than the Dark Side. It is therefore, in near objects, and in sunlight, so dark in comparison with the high lights, that their relative degrees of

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IT is not my intention to enter, in the present portion of the work, upon any examination of Turner's particular effects of light. We must know something about what is beautiful before we speak of these.[1]

§ 1. We are not at present to examine particular effects of light.

At present I wish only to insist upon two great principles of chiaroscuro, which are observed throughout the works of the great modern master, and set at defiance by the ancients; great general laws, which may, or may not, be sources of beauty, but whose observance is indisputably necessary to truth.

Go out some bright sunny day in winter, and look for a tree with a broad trunk, having rather delicate boughs hanging down on the sunny side, near the trunk. Stand four or five yards from it, with your back to the sun. You will find that the boughs between you and the trunk of the tree are very indistinct, that you confound them in places with the trunk itself, and cannot possibly trace one of them from its insertion to its extremity. But the shadows which they cast upon the trunk, you will find clear, dark, and distinct, perfectly traceable through their whole course, except when they are interrupted by the crossing boughs. And if you retire backwards, you will come to a point where you cannot see the intervening

intensity can be scarcely expressed with real truth, except by the jet black of chalk on white paper.

"The effect of objects, then, arranges itself into three distinct masses: the High Light—the Middle Tint—and the Shadow, it being always remembered that the Middle Tint embraces both parts exposed obliquely to the direct light and touched by accidental shadows—and parts turned away from the direct light—exposed to accidental reflected lights, and that the Shadow, whether it occur, as it constantly does, in pieces on the Dark Side, or on luminous parts of other objects, is that part of anything which receives neither direct nor reflected light."]

[1] [For "we speak of these. At present," eds. 1 and 2 read:—

"we speak of them—we must not bring their poetry and their religion down to optics. I cannot watch the sun descending on Sinai, or stand in the starry twilight by the gates of Bethlehem, and begin talking of refraction and polarization. It is your heart that must be the judge here—if you do not *feel* the light, you will not see it. When, therefore, I have proved to you what is beautiful, and what God intended to give pleasure to your spirit in its purity, we will come to Turner as the painter of light—for so emphatically he should be called—and, picture by picture, we will trace at once the truth and the intention.

"But at present . . ."]

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boughs at all, or only a fragment of them here and there, but can still see their shadows perfectly plain. Now, this may serve to show you the immense prominence and importance of shadows where there is anything like bright light. They are, in fact, commonly far more conspicuous than the thing which casts them; for being as large as the casting object, and altogether made up of a blackness deeper than the darkest part of the casting object, while that object is also broken up with positive and reflected lights, their large, broad, unbroken spaces tell strongly on the eye, especially as all form is rendered partially, often totally, invisible within them, and as they are suddenly terminated by the sharpest lines which nature ever shows. For no outline of objects whatsoever is so sharp as the edge of a close shadow. Put your finger over a piece of white paper in the sun, and observe the difference between the softness of the outline of the finger itself and the decision of the edge of the shadow. And note also the excessive gloom of the latter. A piece of black cloth, laid in the light, will not attain one fourth of the blackness of the paper under the shadow.

§ 2. And therefore the distinctness of shadows is the chief means of expressing vividness of light.

Hence shadows are in reality, when the sun is shining, the most conspicuous things in a landscape, next to the highest lights. All forms are understood and explained chiefly by their agency: the roughness of the bark of a tree, for instance, is not seen in the light, nor in the shade; it is only seen between the two, where the shadows of the ridges explain it. And hence, if we have to express vivid light, our very first aim must be to get the shadows sharp and visible; and this is not to be done by blackness (though indeed chalk on white paper is the only thing which comes up to the intensity of real shadows), but by keeping them perfectly flat, keen, and even. A very pale shadow, if it be quite flat, if it conceal the details of the objects it crosses, if it be grey and cold compared with their colour, and very sharp-edged, will be far more conspicuous, and make everything out of it look a great deal more like sunlight, than a shadow ten times its depth, shaded off at

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the edge, and confounded with the colour of the objects on which it falls. Now the old masters of the Italian school, in almost all their works, directly reverse this principle; they blacken their shadows till the picture becomes quite appalling, and everything in it invisible; but they make a point of losing their edges, and carrying them off by gradation, in consequence utterly destroying every appearance of sunlight. All their shadows are the faint, secondary darkness of mere *daylight;* the sun has nothing whatever to do with them. The shadow between the pages of the book which you hold in your hand is distinct and visible enough, though you are, I suppose, reading it by the ordinary daylight of your room, out of the sun; and this weak and secondary shadow is all that we ever find in the Italian masters, as indicative of sunshine. Even Cuyp and Berghem, though they know thoroughly well what they are about in their foregrounds, forget the principle in their distances; and though in Claude's seaports, where he has plain architecture to deal with, he gives us something like real shadows along the stones, the moment we come to ground and foliage with lateral light away go the shadows and the sun together. In the Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, in our own gallery,[1] the trunks of the trees between the water-wheel and the white figure in the middle distance, are dark and visible; but their shadows are scarcely discernible on the ground, and are quite vague and lost in the building. In nature, every bit of the shadow, both on the ground and building, would have been defined and conspicuous; while the trunks themselves would have been faint, confused, and indistinguishable, in their illumined parts, from the grass or distance. So in Poussin's Phocion,[2] the shadow of the stick on the stone in the right-hand corner is shaded off and lost, while you see the stick plainly all the way. In nature's sunlight it would have been the direct reverse: you would have seen the shadow black and sharp all the way down; but you would have

§ 3. *Total absence of such distinctness in the works of the Italian school.*

§ 4. *And partial absence in the Dutch.*

[1] [See above, p. 41 *n.*]
[2] [See above, p. 263 *n.*]

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had to look for the stick, which in all probability would in several places have been confused with the stone behind it.

And so throughout the works of Claude, Poussin, and Salvator, we shall find, especially in their conventional foliage, and unarticulated barbarisms of rock, that their whole sum and substance of chiaroscuro are merely the gradation and variation which nature gives in the *body* of her shadows, and that all which they do to express sunshine, she does to vary shade. They take only one step, while she always takes two; marking, in the first place, with violent decision, the great transition from sun to shade, and then varying the shade itself with a thousand gentle gradations and double shadows, in themselves equivalent, and more than equivalent, to all that the old masters did for their entire chiaroscuro.

§ 5. The perfection of Turner's works in this respect.

Now, if there be one principle or secret more than another on which Turner depends for attaining brilliancy of light, it is his clear and exquisite drawing of the *shadows*. Whatever is obscure, misty, or undefined, in his objects or his atmosphere, he takes care that the shado · be sharp and clear; and then he knows that the light will tak care of itself, and he makes them clear, not by blackness, but by excessive evenness, unity, and sharpness of edge. He will keep them clear and distinct, and make them felt as shadows, though they are so faint that, but for their decisive forms, we should not have observed them for darkness at all. He will throw them one after another like transparent veils along the earth and upon the air, till the whole picture palpitates with them, and yet the darkest of them will be a faint grey, imbued and penetrated with light. The pavement on the left of the Hero and Leander,[1] is about the most thorough piece of this kind of sorcery that I remember in art; but of the general principle, not one of his works is without constant evidence. Take the vignette of the garden opposite the title-page of Rogers's Poems,[2] and note the

[1] [See above, p. 242 *n.*]

[2] [The drawing for this vignette, "The Garden," is No. 220 in the National Gallery.]

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drawing of the nearest balustrade on the right. The balusters themselves are faint and misty, and the light through them feeble; but the shadows of them are sharp and dark, and the intervening light as intense as it can be left. And see how much more distinct the shadow of the running figure is on the pavement, than the chequers of the pavement itself. Observe the shadows on the trunk of the tree at page 91,[1] how they conquer all the details of the trunk itself, and become darker and more conspicuous than any part of the boughs or limbs, and so in the vignette to Campbell's Beech-tree's Petition.[2] Take the beautiful concentration of all that is most characteristic of Italy as she is, at page 168 of Rogers's Italy,[3] where we have the long shadows of the trunks made by far the most conspicuous thing in the whole foreground, and hear how Wordsworth, the keenest-eyed of all modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature, illustrates Turner here, as we shall find him doing in all other points:[4]—

> "At the root
> Of that tall pine, the shadow of whose bare
> And slender stem, while here I sit at eve,
> Oft stretches towards me like a long straight path
> Traced faintly in the greensward."
>
> —*Excursion*, book vi.[5]

So again in the Rhymers' Glen (Illustrations to Scott),[6] note the intertwining of the shadows across the path, and the chequering of the trunks by them; and again on the bridge in the Armstrong's Tower; and yet more in the long avenue of Brienne, where we have a length of two or three miles

[1] [Of Rogers's *Poems*; the subject is "St. Anne's Hill" (front view); the drawing is No. 228 in the National Gallery.]

[2] [In *The Poetical Works of Thomas Campbell*, Moxon, 1837.]

[3] [The subject is the "Italian Composition" (Perugia?); the drawing is No. 202 in the National Gallery; *cf.* above, p. 242.]

[4] [For other illustrations of Turner by Wordsworth, see pp. 347, 353, 363, 405.]

[5] [So in the text; the lines are, however, from book vii.]

[6] [Turner's illustrations to Scott appeared in three publications:—(1) *The Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 28 vols., Cadell, 1834; (2) *The Poetical Works*, 12 vols., Cadell, 1834; (3) *Illustrations to the Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, Tilt, 1834. Of those here mentioned, the "Rhymers' Glen" and "Brienne" appeared in (1), vols. xxi. and ix. respectively; and "Johnny Armstrong's Tower," in (2), vol. ii. "Hampton Court Palace," in No. 7 of "England and Wales."]

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expressed by the playing shadows alone, and the whole picture filled with sunshine by the long lines of darkness cast by the figures on the snow. The Hampton Court, in the England series, is another very striking instance. In fact, the general system of execution observable in all Turner's drawings is, to work his ground richly and fully, sometimes stippling, and giving infinity of delicate, mysterious, and ceaseless detail; and on the ground so prepared to cast his shadows with one dash of the brush, leaving an excessively sharp edge of watery colour. Such at least is commonly the case in such coarse and broad instances as those I have above given. Words are not accurate enough, nor delicate enough, to express or trace the constant, all-pervading influence of the finer and vaguer shadows throughout his works, that thrilling influence which gives to the light they leave its passion and its power. There is not a stone, not a leaf, not a cloud, over which light is not felt to be actually passing and palpitating before our eyes. There is the motion, the actual wave and radiation of the darted beam: not the dull universal daylight, which falls on the landscape without life, or direction, or speculation, equal on all things and dead on all things; but the breathing, animated, exulting light, which feels, and receives, and rejoices, and acts,—which chooses one thing, and rejects another,—which seeks, and finds, and loses again,—leaping from rock to rock, from leaf to leaf, from wave to wave—glowing, or flashing, or scintillating, according to what it strikes; or, in its holier moods, absorbing and enfolding all things in the deep fulness of its repose, and then again losing itself in bewilderment, and doubt, and dimness,—or perishing and passing away, entangled in drifting mist, or melted into melancholy air, but still,—kindling or declining, sparkling or serene,—it is the living light, which breathes in its deepest, most entranced rest, which sleeps, but never dies.

§ 6. The effect of his shadows upon the light.

I need scarcely insist farther on the marked distinction between the works of the old masters and those of the great modern landscape painters in this respect. It is one which the

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reader can perfectly well work out for himself, by the slightest systematic attention; one which he will find existing, not merely between this work and that, but throughout the whole body of their productions, and down to every leaf and line. And a little careful watching of nature, especially in her foliage and foregrounds, and comparison of her with Claude, Gaspar Poussin, and Salvator, will soon show him that those artists worked entirely on conventional principles, not representing what they saw, but what they thought would make a handsome picture; and even when they went to nature, which I believe to have been a very much rarer practice with them than their biographers would have us suppose,[1] they copied her like children, drawing what they knew to be there, but not what they saw there.* I believe you may search the foregrounds of Claude, from one end of Europe to another, and you will not find the shadow of one leaf cast upon another. You will find leaf after leaf painted more or less boldly or brightly out of the black ground, and you will find dark leaves defined in perfect form upon the light; but you will not find the form of a single leaf disguised or interrupted by the shadow of another. And Poussin and Salvator are still farther from anything like genuine truth. There is nothing in their pictures

§ 7. The distinction holds good between almost all the works of the ancient and modern schools.

* Compare sec. ii. chap. ii. § 6.

[1] [Of Claude's open-air studies, a pleasant account is given by his friend Sandrart, a German painter, who was for some years his companion. "In order," says Sandrart, "that he might be able to study closely the innermost secrets of nature, he used to linger in the open air from before daybreak even to nightfall, so that he might learn to depict with a scrupulous adherence to nature's model the changing phases of dawn, the rising and setting sun, as well as the hours of twilight. . . . In this most difficult and toilsome mode of study he spent many years; making excursions into the country every day, and returning even after a long journey without finding it irksome. Sometimes I have chanced to meet him amongst the steepest cliffs at Tivoli, handling the brush before those well-known waterfalls, and painting the actual scene, not by the aid of imagination or invention, but according to the very objects which nature placed before him" (*Claude Gellée Le Lorrain*, by Owen J. Dullea, 1887, p. 16). In his will, Claude mentions two pictures which he bequeathed as "painted from nature" and "executed in the country." Of Gaspard Poussin (Dughet), we are told that he had studios at Frascati and Tivoli, and that he painted many of his pictures out of doors. A little ass, that he cared for himself, his only servant, bore his entire apparatus, provisions and a tent, under which, protected from the sun and wind, he made his landscapes (see *Nicolas Poussin*, by Elizabeth H. Denio, 1899, pp. 147–148).]

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which might not be manufactured in their painting-room, with a branch or two of brambles and a bunch or two of weeds before them, to give them the form of the leaves. And it is refreshing to turn from their ignorant and impotent repetitions of childish conception, to the clear, close, genuine studies of modern artists; for it is not Turner only (though here, as in all other points, the first) who is remarkable for fine and expressive decision of chiaroscuro. Some passages by J. D. Harding are thoroughly admirable in this respect, though this master is getting a little too much into a habit of general keen execution, which prevents the parts which ought to be especially decisive from being felt as such, and which makes his pictures, especially the large ones, look a little thin.[1] But some of his later passages of rock foreground have been very remarkable for the exquisite forms and firm expressiveness of their shadows. And the chiaroscuro of Stanfield is equally deserving of the most attentive study.

§ 8. Second great principle of chiaroscuro. Both high light and deep shadow are used in equal quantity, and only in points.

The second point to which I wish at present to direct attention has reference to the *arrangement* of light and shade. It is the constant habit of nature to use both her highest lights and deepest shadows in exceedingly small quantity; always in points, never in masses. She will give a large mass of tender light in sky or water, impressive by its quantity, and a large mass of tender shadow relieved against it, in foliage, or hill, or building; but the light is always subdued if it be extensive, the shadow always feeble if it be broad. She will then fill up all the rest of her picture with middle tints and pale greys of some sort or another, and on this quiet and harmonious whole she will touch her high lights in spots: the foam of an isolated wave, the sail of a solitary vessel, the flash of the sun from a wet roof, the gleam of a single white-washed cottage, or some such sources of local brilliancy, she will use so vividly and delicately as to throw everything else into definite shade by comparison. And then

[1] [*Cf.* above, p. 201.]

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taking up the gloom, she will use the black hollows of some overhanging bank, or the black dress of some shaded figure, or the depth of some sunless chink of wall or window, so sharply as to throw everything else into definite light by comparison; thus reducing the whole mass of her picture to a delicate middle tint, approaching, of course, here to light, and there to gloom; but yet sharply separated from the utmost degrees either of the one or the other.

§ 9. Neglect or contradiction of this principle by writers on art;

Now it is a curious thing that none of our writers on art seem to have noticed the great principle of nature in this respect. They all talk of deep shadow as a thing that may be given in quantity; one fourth of the picture, or, in certain effects, much more. Barry, for instance, says that the practice of the great painters, who "best understood the effects of chiaroscuro," was, for the most part, to make the mass of middle tint larger than the light, and the mass of dark larger than the masses of light and middle tint together, *i.e.* occupying more than one half of the picture.[1] Now I do not know what we are to suppose is meant by "understanding chiaroscuro." If it means being able to manufacture[2] agreeable patterns in the shape of pyramids, and crosses, and zigzags, into which arms and legs are to be persuaded, and passion and motion arranged, for the promotion and encouragement of the cant of criticism, such a principle may be productive of the most advantageous results. But if it means, being acquainted with the deep, perpetual, systematic, unintrusive simplicity and unwearied variety of nature's chiaroscuro; if it means the perception that blackness and sublimity are not synonymous, and that space and light may possibly be coadjutors; then no man,

[1] ["With respect to the proportionate magnitude of these masses of light, middle tint, and dark as relative to each other, it cannot properly be determined. The nature of the subject, whether gay, majestic, or melancholy, affords the best rule to proceed by in each particular case. But an ingenious French writer has many years since observed, that for the most part the practice of those great painters, who best understood the fine effects of *chiaroscuro*, was to make the mass of middle tint larger than that of the light, and the mass of dark still larger than the masses of light and middle tints united together" (*The Works of James Barry*, 1809, i. 496).]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 read, "able to paint lanterns and candles, the principle here laid down is exceedingly correct; or if it means being able to manufacture . . ."]

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who ever advocated or dreamed of such a principle, is anything more than a novice, blunderer, and trickster in chiaroscuro. And my firm belief is, that though colour is inveighed against by all artists, as the great Circe of art, the great transformer of mind into sensuality, no fondness for it, no study of it, is half so great a peril and stumbling-block to the young student, as the admiration he hears bestowed on such artificial, false, and juggling chiaroscuro, and the instruction he receives, based on such principles as that given us by Fuseli,—that "mere natural light and shade, however separately or individually true, is not always legitimate chiaroscuro in art."[1] It may not always be *agreeable* to a sophisticated, unfeeling, and perverted mind; but the student had better throw up his art at once, than proceed on the conviction that any other can ever be *legitimate*. I believe I shall be perfectly well able to prove, in following parts of the work, that "mere natural light and shade" is the only fit and faithful attendant of the highest art; and that all tricks, all visible intended arrangement, all extended shadows and narrow lights, everything, in fact, in the least degree artificial, or tending to make the mind dwell upon light and shade as such, is an injury, instead of an aid, to conceptions of high ideal dignity. I believe I shall be able also to show, that nature manages her chiaroscuro a great deal more neatly and cleverly than people fancy; that "mere natural light and shade" is a very much finer thing than most artists can put together, and that none think they can improve upon it but those who never understood it.

§ 10. *And consequent misguiding of the student.*

But however this may be, it is beyond dispute that every permission given to the student to amuse himself with painting one figure all black, and the next all white, and throwing them out with a background of nothing, every permission given to him to spoil his pocket-book with sixths of sunshine and sevenths of shade, and other such fractional sublimities, is so much more difficulty

§ 11. *The great value of a simple chiaroscuro.*

[1] [Lecture vi. in *The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli*, 1831, ii. 278.]

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laid in the way of his ever becoming a master; and that none are in the right road to real excellence, but those who are struggling to render the simplicity, purity, and inexhaustible variety of nature's own chiaroscuro in open cloudless daylight, giving the expanse of harmonious light, the speaking decisive shadow, and the exquisite grace, tenderness, and grandeur of aërial opposition of local colour and equally illuminated lines. No chiaroscuro is so difficult as this; and none so noble, chaste, or impressive. On this part of the subject, however, I must not enlarge at present. I wish now only to speak of those great principles of chiaroscuro, which nature observes, even when she is most working for effect; when she is playing with thunderclouds and sunbeams, and throwing one thing out and obscuring another, with the most marked artistical feeling and intention: even then, she never forgets her great rule, to give both the deepest shade and highest light in small quantities:[1] points of the one answering to points of the other, and both vividly conspicuous, and separated from the rest of the landscape.

§ 12. The sharp separation of nature's lights from her middle tint.

And it is most singular that this separation, which is the great source of brilliancy in nature, should not only be unobserved, but absolutely forbidden, by our great writers on art, who are always talking about connecting the light with the shade by *imperceptible gradations*. Now so surely as this is done, all sunshine is lost, for imperceptible gradation from light to dark is the characteristic of objects seen out of sunshine, in what is, in landscape, shadow. Nature's principle of getting light is the direct reverse. She will cover her whole landscape with middle tint, in which she will have as many gradations as you please, and a great many more than you can paint; but on this middle tint she touches her extreme lights, and extreme darks, isolated and sharp, so that the eye goes to them directly, and feels them to be keynotes of the whole composition. And although the dark touches are less attractive than the light

[1] [Eds. 1–4 read, "her great rule, to give precisely the same quantity of deepest shade which she does of highest light, and no more; points . . ."]

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ones, it is not because they are less distinct, but because they exhibit nothing; while the bright touches are in parts where everything is seen, and where in consequence the eye goes to rest. But yet the high lights do not exhibit anything in themselves, they are too bright and dazzle the eye; and having no shadows in them, cannot exhibit form, for form can only be seen by shadow of some kind or another. Hence the highest lights and deepest darks agree in this, that nothing is seen in either of them; that both are in exceedingly small quantity, and both are marked and distinct from the middle tones of the landscape, the one by their brilliancy, the other by their sharp edges, even though many of the more energetic middle tints may approach their intensity very closely.[1]

§ 13. *The truth of Turner.*

I need scarcely do more than tell you to glance at any one of the works of Turner, and you will perceive in a moment the exquisite observation of all these principles; the sharpness, decision, conspicuousness, and excessively small quantity, both of extreme light and extreme shade, all the mass of the picture being graduated and delicate middle tint. Take up the Rivers of France, for instance, and turn over a few of the plates in succession.[2]

1. Château Gaillard (vignette).—Black figures and boats, points of shade; sun-touches on castle, and wake of boat, of light. See how the eye rests on both, and observe how sharp and separate all the lights are, falling in spots, edged by shadow, but not melting off into it.

2. Orleans.—The crowded figures supply both points of shade and light. Observe the delicate middle tint of both in the whole mass of buildings, and compare this with the blackness of Canaletto's shadows, against which neither figures nor anything else can ever tell, as points of shade.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 here contained additional matter, for which see end of the chapter.]

[2] [Now most readily accessible in *The Seine and The Loire*, ed. by M. R. Huish, 1890. The plates here mentioned are in that publication Nos. 22 (drawing in the National Gallery, No. 151), 41 (drawing in the University Galleries, Oxford), 44 (Oxford), 43 (Oxford), 42 (Oxford), 45 (Oxford), 46 (Oxford), 49 (Oxford). The church in the drawing last named is that described by Ruskin in a Letter to a College Friend (Vol. I. p. 430).]

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3. Blois.—White figures in boats, buttresses of bridge, dome of church on the right, for light; women on horseback, heads of boats, for shadow. Note especially the isolation of the light on the church dome.

4. Château de Blois.—Torches and white figures for light, roof of chapel and monks' dresses for shade.

5. Beaugency.—Sails and spire opposed to buoy and boats. An exquisite instance of brilliant, sparkling, isolated touches of morning light.

6. Amboise.—White sail and clouds; cypresses under castle.

7. Château d'Amboise.—The boat in the centre, with its reflections, needs no comment. Note the glancing lights under the bridge. This is a very glorious and perfect instance.

8. St. Julien, Tours.—Especially remarkable for its preservation of deep points of gloom, because the whole picture is one of extended shade.

I need scarcely go on. The above instances are taken as they happen to come, without selection. The reader can proceed for himself. I may, however, name a few cases of chiaroscuro more especially deserving of his study:—Scene between Quillebœuf and Villequier, Honfleur, Light Towers of the Héve, On the Seine between Mantes and Vernon, The Lantern at St. Cloud, Confluence of Seine and Marne, Troyes;[1] the first and last vignette, and those at pages 36, 63, 95, 184, 192, 203, of Rogers's Poems;[2] the first and second in Campbell;[3] St. Maurice in the Italy, where note the black stork;[4] Brienne, Skiddaw, Mayburgh, Melrose, Jedburgh, in the illustrations to

[1] [The plates above mentioned are, in *The Seine and The Loire*, Nos. 18 (drawing, National Gallery, No. 128), 20 (N.G., No. 159); the plate of the "Light Towers of the Héve" has disappeared (see Huish, *l.c.*, p. vii.), the drawing is National Gallery, No. 160; 25 (N.G., 138), 31 (N.G., 156), 38 and 40 (N.G., 150).]

[2] [The vignettes referred to are "The Garden" (drawing No. 220 in the National Gallery), "Datur Hora Quieti" (N.G., 397), "Lodore" (N.G., 239), "The English Manor House" (N.G., 399), "The Rialto" (N.G., 394), "The Boy of Egremond" (N.G., 236), "The Alps at Daybreak" (N.G., 242), and "Loch Lomond" (N.G., 240).]

[3] ["Summer Eve: Rainbow" and "Andes Coast."]

[4] [The "St. Maurice" is at p. 9 of the *Italy*; the drawing, National Gallery, 205.]

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Scott;[1] and the vignettes to Milton;[2]—not because these are one whit superior to others of his works, but because the laws of which we have been speaking are more strikingly developed in them, and because they have been well engraved. It is impossible to reason from the larger plates, in which half the chiaroscuro is totally destroyed by the haggling, blackening, and "making out" of the engravers.

[Eds. 1 and 2 contain between § 12 and § 13 of the later editions the following passages:—]

§ 13. *General falsehood of the old masters in this respect.*

"Now observe how totally the old masters lost truth in this respect by their vicious trickery in trying to gain tone. They were glad enough to isolate their lights, indeed; but they did even this artificially, joining them imperceptibly, as Reynolds says,[3] with the shadows, and so representing, not a point of illuminated objects on which light strikes and is gone, but a lantern in the picture, spreading rays around it, and out of it. And then to gain the deceptive relief of material objects against extended lights, as noticed in Chapter I. of this section, § 4, they were compelled to give vast spaces of deep shadow, and so entirely lost the power of giving the points of darkness. Thus the whole balance of every one of their pictures is totally destroyed, and their composition as thoroughly false in chiaroscuro, as if they had given us no shade at all, because one member, and that the most important of the shadows of the landscape, is totally omitted. Take the Berghem, No. 132, Dulwich Gallery,[4] which is a most studied piece of chiaroscuro. Here we have the light isolated with a vengeance! Looking at it from the opposite side of the room, we fancy it must be the representation of some experiment with the oxy-hydrogen microscope; and it is with no small astonishment that we find on closer approach, that all the radiance proceeds from a cow's head! Mithra may well be inimical to Taurus, if his occupation is to be taken out of his hands in this way![5] If cattle heads are to be thus phosphorescent, we shall be able to do without the sun altogether!

"But even supposing that this were a true representation of a point of light, where are our points of darkness? The whole picture, wall, figures, and ground, is one mass of deep shade, through which the details are, indeed,

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[1] [For Brienne, see above, § 5 *n.*; Skiddaw and Mayburgh, vol. xi. of the *Poetical Works*; Jedburgh, vol. ii. *Poems*; Melrose, vol. vi.]

[2] [Turner's illustrations to Milton appeared in (1) *The Works of Milton*, 7 vols., Macrone, 1835; (2) *The Poetical Works*, 1 vol., Tegg, 1841.]

[3] [*Discourses*, viii.]

[4] [Now No. 88, "A Farrier and Peasants near Roman Ruins:" for another reference to the picture, see above, pt. i. sec. ii. ch. ii. § 7.]

[5] [An allusion to the subject, so often treated by the ancient sculptors, of Mithra, the sun-god, slaying a bull (see, *e.g.*, E. T. Cook's *Handbook to the Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum*, 1903, p. 14). Ruskin refers to the rites of Mithra in "Salsette and Elephanta"; see Vol. II. p. 96.]

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marvellously given when we look close, but which totally precludes all possibility of giving a single point or keynote of shade. Now nature, just as far as she raised the white cow's head above all the middle tint in light, would have put some black cow's head, or hole in the wall, or dark piece of dress, something, it matters not what—below all the middle tint in darkness,—just as violent and just as conspicuous in shade, as the head is violent and conspicuous in light. Consequently, Berghem has given us only two members of the system of chiaroscuro, of which nature has appointed that there shall always be three.

§ 14. Excellence of the chiaroscuro of M. Angelo, P. Veronese, and Rubens.

"I have chosen this picture for illustration, because it is a very clever and careful work by a master, not, in his ordinary works, viciously disposed to tricks of chiaroscuro. But it must be evident to the reader, that in the same way, and in a far greater degree, those masters are false who are commonly held up as the great examples of management of chiaroscuro. All erred, exactly in proportion as they plunged with greater ardour into the jack-a-lantern chase. Rembrandt[1] most fatally and constantly; and (of course I speak of quantity, not of quality, of shade) next to him, Correggio; while the Florentines and Romans kept right just because they cared little about the matter, and kept their light and shade in due subordination to higher truths of art. Thus Michael Angelo's chiaroscuro is, perhaps, the most just, perfect, unaffected, and impressive existing. Raffaelle's early works are often very truthful in quantity, though not in management,—the Transfiguration totally wrong. The frescos of the Vatican, before their blues gave way, must have been very perfect. But Cagliari, and Rubens in his finest works, are the only two examples of the unison of perfect chiaroscuro with perfect colour. We have no lantern-lights in their works, all is kept chaste and shed equally from the sky, not radiating from the object; and we have invariably some energetic bit of black, or intense point of gloom, commonly opposed to yellow to make it more conspicuous, as far below all the rest of the picture as the most brilliant lights are above it.

§ 15. Errors of the landscape painters.

"Among the landscape painters, Cuyp is very often right; Claude, sometimes, by accident, as in the Seaport, No. 14 in our own Gallery,[2] where the blue stooping figure is a beautifully placed key-note of gloom. Both the Poussins, Salvator, and our own Wilson, are always wrong, except in such few effects of twilight as would, even in reality, reduce the earth and sky to two broad equalized masses of shade and light. I do not name particular works, because if the facts I have above stated be once believed, or proved, as they may be, by the slightest observation, their application is easy, and the error or truth of works self-evident."

§ 16. [This was identical with § 13 in the text, above, pp. 314–6.]

§ 17. Recapitulation.

"Such, then, are the two great principles by which the chiaroscuro of our greatest modern master differs from that of the more celebrated of the ancients. I need scarcely again point out the farther confirmation resulting from the examination of them, of my assertion that ideas of imitation were incompatible with those of truth.

[1] [*Cf.* vol. iv. of *Modern Painters*, ch. iii., and *The Cestus of Aglaia*, § 76.]
[2] ["Seaport: the Queen of Sheba," for which picture see above, p. 169.]

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We have now seen that to obtain *one* truth of tone necessary for the purposes of imitation, the old masters were compelled to sacrifice, first, real relation of distances, then truth of colour, and finally, all legitimate chiaroscuro,—sacrifices which, however little they may be felt by superficial observers, will yet prevent the real lover of nature from having the slightest pleasure in their works, while our great modern landscape painter, scorning all deceptive imitation, states boldly the truths which are in his power, and trusts for admiration, not to the ill-regulated feelings, which are offended because his statement must be imperfect, but to the disciplined intellect, which rejoices in it for being true."

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CHAPTER IV

OF TRUTH OF SPACE:—FIRST AS DEPENDENT ON THE FOCUS OF THE EYE*

§ 1. Space is more clearly indicated by the drawing of objects than by their hue.

In the first chapter of this section,[1] I noticed the distinction between real aërial perspective, and that overcharged contrast of light and shade by which the old masters obtained their deceptive effect; and I showed that, though inferior to them in the precise quality or tone of aërial colour, our great modern master is altogether more truthful in the expression of the proportionate relation of all his distances to one another. I am now about to examine those modes of expressing space, both in nature and art by far the most important, which are dependent, not on the relative hues of objects, but on the *drawing* of them: by far the most important, I say, because the most constant and certain; for nature herself is not always aërial. Local effects are frequent which interrupt and violate the laws of aërial tone, and induce strange deception in our ideas of distance. I have often seen the summit of a snowy mountain look nearer than its base, owing to the perfect clearness of the upper air. But the *drawing* of objects, that is to say, the degree in which their details and parts are

* I have left this chapter in its original place, because I am more than ever convinced of the truth of the position advanced in the 8th paragraph; nor can I at present assign any other cause, than that here given, for what is there asserted; and yet I cannot but think that I have allowed far too much influence to a change so slight as that which we insensibly make in the focus of the eye; and that the real justification of Turner's practice, with respect to some of his foregrounds, is to be elsewhere sought. I leave the subject, for the present, to the reader's consideration.[2]

[1] [Above, ch. i. §§ 3, 4, pp. 260–1.]
[2] [This footnote was added in ed. 3. See note on § 8 below.]

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distinct or confused, is an unfailing and certain criterion of their distance; and if this be rightly rendered in a painting, we shall have genuine truth of space, in spite of many errors in aërial tone; while, if this be neglected, all space will be destroyed, whatever dexterity of tint may be employed to conceal the defective drawing.

§ 2. It is impossible to see objects at unequal distances distinctly at one moment.

First, then, it is to be noticed, that the eye, like any other lens, must have its focus altered, in order to convey a distinct image of objects at different distances; so that it is totally impossible to see distinctly, at the same moment, two objects, one of which is much farther off than another. Of this, any one may convince himself in an instant. Look at the bars of your window-frame, so as to get a clear image of their lines and form, and you cannot, while your eye is fixed on them, perceive anything but the most indistinct and shadowy images of whatever objects may be visible beyond. But fix your eyes on those objects, so as to see them clearly, and though they are just beyond and apparently beside the window-frame, that frame will only be felt or seen as a vague, flitting, obscure interruption to whatever is perceived beyond it. A little attention directed to this fact will convince every one of its universality, and prove beyond dispute that objects at unequal distances cannot be seen together, not from the intervention of air or mist, but from the impossibility of the rays proceeding from both converging to the same focus, so that the whole impression, either of one or the other, must necessarily be confused, indistinct, and inadequate.

§ 3. Especially such as are both comparatively near.

But, be it observed (and I have only to request that whatever I say may be tested by immediate experiment), the difference of focus necessary is greatest within the first five hundred yards; and therefore, though it is totally impossible to see an object ten yards from the eye, and one a quarter of a mile beyond it, at the same moment, it is perfectly possible to see one a quarter of a mile off, and one five miles beyond it, at the same moment. The consequence of this is, practically, that in a

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real landscape, we can see the whole of what would be called the middle distance and distance together, with facility and clearness; but while we do so, we can see nothing in the foreground beyond a vague and indistinct arrangement of lines and colours; and that if, on the contrary, we look at any foreground object, so as to receive a distinct impression of it, the distance and middle distance become all disorder and mystery.

§ 4. In painting, therefore, either the foreground or distance must be partially sacrificed.

And therefore, if in a painting our foreground is anything, our distance must be nothing, and *vice versâ;* for if we represent our near and distant objects as giving both at once that distinct image to the eye, which we receive in nature from each when we look at them separately;* and if we distinguish them from each other only by the air-tone and indistinctness dependent on positive distance, we violate one of the most essential principles of nature; we represent that as seen at once which can only be seen by two separate acts of seeing, and tell a falsehood as gross as if we had represented four sides of a cubic object visible together.

Now, to this fact and principle, no landscape painter of the old school, as far as I remember, ever paid the slightest

* This incapacity of the eye must not be confounded with its incapability to comprehend a large portion of *lateral* space at once. We indeed can see, at any one moment, little more than one point, the objects beside it being confused and indistinct; but we need pay no attention to this in art, because we can see just as little of the picture as we can of the landscape without turning the eye; and hence any slurring or confusing of one part of it, laterally, more than another, is not founded on any truth of nature, but is an expedient of the artist—and often an excellent and desirable one—to make the eye rest where he wishes it. But as the touch expressive of a distant object is as near upon the canvas as that expressive of a near one, both are seen distinctly and with the same focus of the eye; and hence an immediate contradiction of nature results, unless one or other be given with an artificial or increased indistinctness, expressive of the appearance peculiar to the unadapted focus. On the other hand, it must be noted that the greater part of the effect above described is consequent, not on variation of focus, but on the different angle at which near objects are seen by each of the two eyes, when both are directed towards the distance.[1]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 do not contain the last sentence, "On the other hand . . . towards the distance."]

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attention. Finishing their foregrounds clearly and sharply, and with vigorous impression on the eye, giving even the leaves of their bushes and grass with perfect edge and shape, they proceeded into the distance with equal attention to what they could see of its details—they gave all that the eye can perceive in a distance, when it is fully and entirely devoted to it; and therefore, though masters of aërial tone, though employing every expedient that art could supply to conceal the intersection of lines, though caricaturing the force and shadow of near objects to throw them close upon the eye, they *never* succeeded in truly representing space.[1] Turner introduced a new era in landscape art, by showing that the foreground might be sunk for the distance, and that it was possible to express immediate proximity to the spectator, without giving anything like completeness to the forms of the near objects.

§ 5. Which not being done by the old masters, they could not express space.

§ 6. But modern artists have succeeded in fully carrying out this principle.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 proceed as follows:—

"And that they did not, must be felt by every observer in cases where varied forms of sky or distance join with near foliage or foreground, when, though the near leaves may be made almost black for force, and the encountering sky or hills toned into the most exquisite purity of atmosphere, nothing can prevent the eye from feeling the intersection and junction of the lines, and an inextricable confusion of parts, which I have sometimes heard critics expatiating upon as harmony of composition and unity of arrangement, when, in fact, it is destruction of space. Some exceptions occur when the background has been considered of small importance, and has been laid in merely to set off near objects; and often very beautiful exceptions in the bits of landscape, thrown in by great masters as the backgrounds to their historical pictures, usually a thousand times better than the laboured efforts of the real landscape painters.[2] But only Rubens affords us instances of anything like complete observation of the principle in entire landscape. The distance of his picture of his own villa, in the National Gallery, is no small nor unimportant part of the composition; the chief light and colour of the picture are dedicated to it. But Rubens felt that, after giving the very botany and ornithology of his foreground, he could not maintain equal decision, nor truthfully give one determined outline in the distance. Nor is there one; all is indistinct, and confused, and mingling, though every thing, and an infinity of things, too, is told; and if any person will take the trouble

§ 6. Exception in the landscapes of Rubens.

[2] "It is particularly interesting to observe the difference between the landscape of Nicholas Poussin when it is a background and when it is a picture, not with reference to the point at present under discussion, but to general grandeur and truth of conception. When it is a background, it almost draws us away from the figures; when it is a picture, we should be glad of some figures to draw us away from it. His backgrounds are full of light, pure in conception, majestic in outline, graceful in detail, and in every way instructive and delightful—take No. 295 in the Dulwich Gallery, for instance. But his landscapes sometimes sink almost as low as Gaspar's, and are lightless, conventional, false, and feeble—only just less so than those of the professed landscape painters, and that is saying little enough for them."

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This, observe, is not done by slurred or soft lines (always the sign of vice in art),[1] but by a decisive imperfection, a firm, but partial assertion of form, which the eye feels indeed to be close home to it, and yet cannot rest upon, nor cling to, nor entirely understand, and from which it is driven away of necessity to those parts of distance on which it is intended to repose.[2] And this principle, originated by Turner, and fully carried out by him only, has yet been acted on with judgment and success by several less powerful artists of the English school. Some six years ago, the brown moorland foregrounds of Copley Fielding were very instructive in this respect.[3] Not a line in them was made out, not a single object clearly distinguishable. Wet broad sweeps of the brush, sparkling, careless, and accidental as nature herself, always truthful as

to keep his eye on this distance for ten minutes, and then turn to any other landscape in the room, he will feel them flat, crude, cutting, and destitute of space and light. Titian, Claude, or Poussin, it matters not, however scientifically opposed in colour, however exquisitely mellowed and removed in tone, however vigorously relieved with violent shade, all will look flat canvass beside this truthful, melting, abundant, limitless distance of Rubens. But it was reserved for modern art to take even a bolder step in the pursuit of truth. To sink the distance for the foreground was comparatively easy; but it implied the partial destruction of exactly that part of the landscape which is most interesting, most dignified, and most varied; of all, in fact, except the mere leafage and stone under the spectator's feet. Turner introduced a new era," etc.

§ 7. *But modern artists, etc.* [*as in text.*]

The Rubens in the National Gallery, referred to above, is No. 66; for other references to it, see *The Poetry of Architecture*, § 193 (Vol. I. p. 146), and below, p. 362. The Poussin, No. 229 (formerly No. 295) in the Dulwich Gallery, is "The Inspiration of Anacreon"; for another reference to it, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. v. § 17.]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add this footnote here:—

"That is to say, if they are systematically and constantly used. Soft and melting lines are necessary in some places, as, for instance, in the important and striking parts of the outline of an object which turns gradually, so as to have a large flat surface under the eye just when it becomes relieved against space, and so wherever thick mist is to be expressed, or very intense light; but in general, and as a principle of art, lines ought to be made tender by graduation and change as they proceed, not by slurring. The hardest line in the world will not be painful if it be managed as nature manages it, by pronouncing one part and losing another, and keeping the whole in a perpetual state of transition. Michael Angelo's lines are as near perfection as mortal work can be; distinguished, on the one hand, from the hardness and sharpness of Perugino and the early Italians, but far more, on the other, from the vicious slurring and softness which Murillo falls into when he wishes to be fine. A hard line is only an imperfection, but a slurred one is commonly a falsehood. The artist whose fault is hardness *may* be on the road to excellence—he whose fault is softness *must* be on the road to ruin."]

[2] [For Ruskin's reply to a criticism on this passage, see below, Appendix ii., p. 642.]

[3] [Cf. *The Art of England*, ch. vi.]

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far as they went, implying knowledge, though not expressing it, suggested everything, while they represented nothing. But far off into the mountain distance came the sharp edge and the delicate form; the whole intention and execution of the picture being guided and exerted where the great impression of space and size was to be given. The spectator was compelled to go forward into the waste of hills; there, where the sun broke wide upon the moor, he must walk and wander; he could not stumble and hesitate over the near rocks, nor stop to botanize on the first inches of his path.* And the impression of these pictures was always great and enduring, as it was simple and truthful. I do not know anything in art which has expressed more completely the force and feeling of nature in these particular scenes. And it is a farther illustration † of the principle we are insisting upon, that where, as in some of his later works, he has bestowed more labour on the foreground, the picture has lost both in space and sublimity. And among artists in general, who are either not aware of the principle, or fear to act upon it (for it requires no small courage as well as skill, to treat a foreground with that indistinctness and mystery which they have been accustomed to consider as characteristic of distance), the foreground is not only felt, as every landscape painter will confess, to be the most embarrassing and unmanageable part of the picture, but, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, will go near to destroy the effect of the rest of the composition. Thus Callcott's Trent[1] is severely injured by the harsh group of foreground

* There is no inconsistency, observe, between this passage and what was before asserted respecting the necessity of botanical fidelity where the foreground is the object of attention. Compare Part II. sec. i. chap. vii. § 10: —"To paint mist rightly, space rightly, and light rightly, it may be often necessary to paint *nothing else* rightly."

† Hardly. It would have been so only had the recently finished foregrounds been as accurate in detail as they are abundant: they are painful, I believe, not from their finish, but their falseness.[2]

[1] [For "Thus Callcott's Trent is," eds. 1 and 2 read, "Thus Callcott's magnificent Trent (perhaps the best picture, on the whole, he has ever painted) is." The "Trent in the Tyrol" was exhibited at the Academy in 1836 (No. 130); and engraved in Finden's *Royal Gallery of British Art*.]

[2] [The two footnotes * and † were first added in ed. 3.]

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figures; and Stanfield very rarely gets through an Academy picture without destroying much of its space, by too much determination of near form; while Harding constantly sacrifices his distance, and compels the spectator to dwell on the foreground altogether, though indeed, with such foregrounds as he gives us, we are most happy so to do. But it is in Turner only that we see a bold and decisive choice of the distance and middle distance, as his great objects of attention; and by him only that the foreground is united and adapted to it, not by any want of drawing, or coarseness, or carelessness of execution, but by the most precise and beautiful indication or suggestion of just so much of even the minutest forms as the eye can see when its focus is not adapted to them. And herein is another reason for the vigour and wholeness of the effect of Turner's works at any distance; while those of almost all other artists are sure to lose space as soon as we lose sight of the details.

§ 7. *Especially of Turner.*

And now we see the reason for the singular, and to the ignorant in art the offensive, execution of Turner's figures.[1] I do not mean to assert that there is any reason whatsoever for *bad* drawing (though in landscape it matters exceedingly little); but that there are both reason and necessity for that *want* of drawing which gives even the nearest figures round balls with four pink spots in them instead of faces, and four dashes of the brush instead of hands and feet; for it is totally impossible that if the eye be adapted to receive the rays proceeding from the utmost distance, and some partial impression from all the distances, it should be capable of perceiving more of the forms and features of near figures than Turner gives. And how absolutely necessary to the faithful representation of space this indecision really is, might be proved with the utmost ease by any one who had veneration enough for the artist to sacrifice one of his pictures to his fame; who would take some one of his works in which the figures were most incomplete, and have

§ 8. *Justification of the want of drawing in Turner's figures.*

[1] [Ruskin returned to this subject and treated it at length in *Notes on the Turner Gallery, s.* No. 522.]

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them painted in by[1] any of our delicate and first-rate figure painters, absolutely preserving every colour and shade of Turner's group, so as not to lose one atom of the composition, but giving eyes for the pink spots and feet for the white ones. Let the picture be so exhibited in the Academy, and even novices in art would feel at a glance that its truth of space was gone, that every one of its beauties and harmonies had undergone decomposition, that it was now a grammatical solecism, a painting of impossibilities, a thing to torture the eye and offend the mind.[2]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read "by Goodall or any, etc." Mr. Frederick Goodall, R.A., had begun to exhibit figure-subjects in the Academy as early as 1839.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 add the following paragraph at the end of the chapter :—

"The laborious completeness of the figures and foregrounds of the old masters, then, far from being a source of distance and space, is evidently destructive of both. It may, perhaps, be desirable on other grounds ; it may be beautiful and necessary to the ideal of landscape. I assert at present nothing to the contrary ; I assert merely that it is mathematically demonstrable to be untrue."]

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CHAPTER V

OF TRUTH OF SPACE:—SECONDLY, AS ITS APPEARANCE IS DEPENDENT ON THE POWER OF THE EYE

In the last chapter, we have seen how indistinctness of individual distances becomes necessary in order to express the adaptation of the eye to one or other of them; we have now to examine that kind of indistinctness which is dependent on real retirement of the object, even when the focus of the eye is fully concentrated upon it. The first kind of indecision is that which belongs to all objects which the eye is not adapted to, whether near or far off: the second is that consequent upon the want of power in the eye to receive a clear image of objects at a great distance from it, however attentively it may regard them.

§ 1. The peculiar indistinctness dependent on the retirement of objects from the eye.

Draw on a piece of white paper a square and a circle, each about a twelfth or eighth of an inch in diameter, and blacken them so that their forms may be very distinct; place your paper against the wall at the end of the room, and retire from it a greater or less distance accordingly as you have drawn the figures larger or smaller. You will come to a point where, though you can see both the spots with perfect plainness, you cannot tell which is the square and which the circle.

Now this takes place of course with every object in a landscape, in proportion to its distance and size. The definite forms of the leaves of a tree, however sharply and separately they may appear to come against the sky, are quite indistinguishable at fifty yards off, and the form of everything becomes confused before we finally lose sight of it. Now if the character of an object, say the front of a house, be explained by a variety of forms in

§ 2. Causes confusion, but not annihilation of details.

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it, as the shadows in the tops of the windows, the lines of the architraves, the seams of the masonry, etc.; these lesser details, as the object falls into distance, become confused and undecided, each of them losing its definite form, but all being perfectly visible as something, a white or a dark spot or stroke, not lost sight of, observe, but yet so seen that we cannot tell what they are. As the distance increases, the confusion becomes greater, until at last the whole front of the house becomes merely a flat pale space, in which, however, there is still observable a kind of richness and chequering, caused by the details in it, which, though totally merged and lost in the mass, have still an influence on the texture of that mass; until at last the whole house itself becomes a mere light or dark spot which we can plainly see, but cannot tell what it is, nor distinguish it from a stone or any other object.

§ 3. *Instances in various objects.*

Now what I particularly wish to insist upon, is the state of vision in which all the details of an object are seen, and yet seen in such confusion and disorder that we cannot in the least tell what they are, or what they mean. It is not mist between us and the object, still less is it shade, still less is it want of character; it is a confusion, a mystery, an interfering of undecided lines with each other, not a diminution of their number; window and door, architrave and frieze, all are there: it is no cold and vacant mass, it is full and rich and abundant, and yet you cannot see a single form so as to know what it is. Observe your friend's face as he is coming up to you. First it is nothing more than a white spot; now it is a face, but you cannot see the two eyes, nor the mouth, even as spots; you see a confusion of lines, a something which you know from experience to be indicative of a face, and yet you cannot tell how it is so. Now he is nearer, and you can see the spots for the eyes and mouth, but they are not blank spots neither; there is detail in them; you cannot see the lips, nor the teeth, nor the brows, and yet you see more than mere spots; it is a mouth and an eye, and there is light and sparkle and expression in them, but nothing distinct. Now he is nearer still, and you can see that

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he is like your friend, but you cannot tell whether he is, or not; there is a vagueness and indecision of line still. Now you are sure, but even yet there are a thousand things in his face which have their effect in inducing the recognition, but which you cannot see so as to know what they are.

§ 4. Two great resultant truths: that nature is never distinct and never vacant.

Changes like these, and states of vision corresponding to them, take place with each and all of the objects of nature, and two great principles of truth are deducible from their observation. First, place an object as close to the eye as you like, there is always something in it which you *cannot* see, except in the hinted and mysterious manner above described. You can see the texture of a piece of dress, but you cannot see the individual threads which compose it, though they are all felt, and have each of them influence on the eye. Secondly, place an object as far from the eye as you like, and until it becomes itself a mere spot, there is always something in it which you *can* see, though only in the hinted manner above described. Its shadows and lines and local colours are not lost sight of as it retires; they get mixed and indistinguishable, but they are still there, and there is a difference always perceivable between an object possessing such details and a flat or vacant space. The grass blades of a meadow a mile off, are so far discernible that there will be a marked difference between its appearance and that of a piece of wood painted green. And thus nature is never distinct and never vacant, she is always mysterious, but always abundant; you always see something, but you never see all.

And thus arise that exquisite finish and fulness which God has appointed to be the perpetual source of fresh pleasure to the cultivated and observant eye; a finish which no distance can render invisible, and no nearness comprehensible; which in every stone, every bough, every cloud, and every wave is multiplied around us, for ever presented, and for ever exhaustless. And hence in art, every space or touch in which we can see everything, or in which we can see nothing, is false. Nothing can be true which is either complete or

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vacant; every touch is false which does not suggest more than it represents, and every space is false which represents nothing.

§ 5. Complete violation of both these principles by the old masters. They are either distinct or vacant.

Now, I would not wish for any more illustrative or marked examples of the total contradiction of these two great principles, than the landscape works of the old masters, taken as a body; the Dutch masters furnishing the cases of seeing everything, and the Italians of seeing nothing. The rule with both is indeed the same, differently applied—"You shall see the bricks in the wall, and be able to count them, or you shall see nothing but a dead flat:" but the Dutch give you the bricks, and the Italians the flat. Nature's rule being the precise reverse—"You shall never be able to count the bricks, but you shall never see a dead space."

§ 6. Instances from Nicholas Poussin.

Take, for instance, the street in the centre of the really great landscape of Poussin (great in feeling at least) marked 260 in the Dulwich Gallery.[1] The houses are dead square masses with a light side and a dark side, and black touches for windows.[2] There is no suggestion of anything in any of the spaces; the light wall is dead grey, the dark wall dead grey, and the windows dead black. How differently would nature have treated us! She would have let us see the Indian corn hanging on the walls, and the image of the Virgin at the angles, and the sharp, broken, broad shadows of the tiled eaves, and the deep-ribbed tiles with the doves upon them, and the carved Roman capital built into the wall, and the white and blue stripes of the mattresses stuffed out of the windows, and the flapping corners of the mat blinds. All would have been there; not as such, not like the corn, or blinds or tiles, not to be comprehended or understood, but a confusion of yellow and black spots and strokes, carried far too fine for the eye to follow, microscopic in its minuteness,

[1] [By Nicolas Poussin (or an imitator), "A Roman Road," now No. 203; see above, p. 264.]

[2] [For "windows. There is no suggestion," eds. 1 and 2 read, "windows. The light side is blank, No. 1; the dark side is blank, No. 2; and the windows are blanks, Nos. 3, 4, 5. There is not a shadow of a suggestion . . ."]

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and filling every atom and part of space with mystery, out of which would have arranged itself the general impression of truth and life.

Again, take the distant city on the right bank of the river in Claude's Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, in the National Gallery.[1] I have seen many cities in my life, and drawn not a few; and I have seen many fortifications, fancy ones included, which frequently supply us with very new ideas indeed, especially in matters of proportion; but I do not remember ever having met with either a city or a fortress *entirely* composed of round towers of various heights and sizes, all facsimiles of each other, and absolutely agreeing in the number of battlements. I have, indeed, some faint recollection of having delineated such a one in the first page of a spelling book when I was four years old; but, somehow or other, the dignity and perfection of the ideal were not appreciated, and the volume was not considered to be increased in value by the frontispiece. Without, however, venturing to doubt the entire sublimity of the same ideal as it occurs in Claude, let us consider how nature, if she had been fortunate enough to originate so perfect a conception, would have managed it in its details. Claude has permitted us to see every battlement, and the first impulse we feel upon looking at the picture is to count how many there are. Nature would have given us a peculiar confused roughness of the upper lines, a multitude of intersections and spots, which we should have known from experience was indicative of battlements, but which we might as well have thought of creating as of counting. Claude has given you the walls below in one dead void of uniform grey. There is nothing to be seen, or felt, or guessed at in it; it is grey paint or grey shade, whichever you may choose to call it, but it is nothing more. Nature would have let you see, nay, would have compelled you to see, thousands of spots and lines, not one to be absolutely understood or accounted for, but yet all characteristic and different from each other; breaking lights on shattered

§ 7. *From Claude.*

[1] [No. 12; for other references to the picture, see above, p. 41 *n.*]

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stones, vague shadows from waving vegetation, irregular stains of time and weather, mouldering hollows, sparkling casements; all would have been there; none indeed, seen as such, none comprehensible or like themselves, but all visible; little shadows and sparkles, and scratches, making that whole space of colour a transparent, palpitating, various infinity.

§ 8. *And G. Poussin.*

Or take one of Poussin's extreme distances, such as that in the Sacrifice of Isaac.[1] It is luminous, retiring, delicate and perfect in tone, and is quite complete enough to deceive and delight the careless eye to which all distances are alike; nay, it is perfect and masterly, and absolutely right, if we consider it as a sketch,—as a first plan of a distance, afterwards to be carried out in detail. But we must remember that all these alternate spaces of grey and gold are not the landscape itself, but the treatment of it; not its substance, but its light and shade. They are just what nature would cast over it, and write upon it with every cloud, but which she would cast in play, and without carefulness, as matters of the very smallest possible importance. All her work and her attention would be given to bring out from underneath this, and through this, the forms and the material character which this can only be valuable to illustrate, not to conceal. Every one of those broad spaces she would linger over in protracted delight, teaching you fresh lessons in every hair's breadth of it, and pouring her fulness of invention into it, until the mind lost herself in following her: now fringing the dark edge of the shadow with a tufted line of level forest; now losing it for an instant in a breath of mist; then breaking it with the white gleaming angle of a narrow brook; then dwelling upon it again in a gentle, mounded, melting undulation, over the other side of which she would carry you down into a dusty space of soft crowded light, with the hedges and the paths and the sprinkled cottages and scattered trees mixed up and mingled together in one beautiful, delicate,

[1] [No. 31 in the National Gallery, by G. Poussin. For other references to the picture, see above, p. 282; and below, pp. 348, 376.]

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impenetrable mystery, sparkling and melting, and passing away into the sky, without one line of distinctness, or one instant of vacancy.

§ 9. *The imperative necessity, in landscape painting, of fulness and finish.*

Now it is, indeed, impossible for the painter to follow all this; he cannot come up to the same degree and order of infinity, but he can give us a lesser kind of infinity. He has not one thousandth part of the space to occupy which nature has; but he can, at least, leave no part of that space vacant and unprofitable. If nature carries out her minutiæ over miles, he has no excuse for generalizing in inches. And if he will only give us all he can, if he will give us a fulness as complete and as mysterious as nature's, we will pardon him for its being the fulness of a cup instead of an ocean. But we will not pardon him, if, because he has not the mile to occupy, he will not occupy the inch, and because he has fewer means at his command, will leave half of those in his power unexerted. Still less will we pardon him for mistaking the sport of nature for her labour, and for following her only in her hour of rest, without observing how she has worked for it. After spending centuries in raising the forest, and guiding the river, and modelling the mountain, she exults over her work in buoyancy of spirit, with playful sunbeam and flying cloud; but the painter must go through the same labour, or he must not have the same recreation. Let him chisel his rock faithfully, and tuft his forest delicately, and then we will allow him his freaks of light and shade, and thank him for them; but we will not be put off with the play before the lesson, with the adjunct instead of the essence, with the illustration instead of the fact.

§ 10. *Breadth is not vacancy.*

I am somewhat anticipating my subject here, because I can scarcely help answering the objections which I know must arise in the minds of most readers, especially of those who are *partially* artistical, respecting "generalization," "breadth," "effect," etc. It were to be wished that our writers on art would not dwell so frequently on the necessity of breadth, without explaining what it means; and that we had more constant reference made to the principle

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which I can only remember having seen once clearly explained and insisted on, that breadth is not vacancy. Generalization is unity, not destruction of parts; and composition is not annihilation, but arrangement of materials. The breadth which unites the truths of nature with her harmonies is meritorious and beautiful; but the breadth which annihilates those truths by the million is not painting nature, but painting over her. And so the masses which result from right concords and relations of details are sublime and impressive; but the masses which result from the eclipse of details are contemptible and painful.* And we shall show, in following parts of the work, that distances like those of Poussin are mere meaningless tricks of clever execution, which, when once discovered, the artist may repeat over and over again, with mechanical contentment and perfect satisfaction, both to himself and to his superficial admirers, with no more exertion of intellect nor awakening of feeling than any tradesman has in multiplying some ornamental pattern of furniture. Be this as it may, however, (for we cannot enter upon the discussion of the question here,) the falsity and imperfection of such distances admit of no dispute. Beautiful and ideal they may be; true they are not: and in the same way we might go through every part and portion of the works of the old masters, showing throughout, either that you have every leaf and blade of grass staring defiance at the mystery of nature, or that you have dead spaces of absolute vacuity, equally determined in their denial of her fulness. And even if we ever find (as here and there, in their better pictures, we do) changeful passages of agreeable playing colour, or mellow and transparent modulations of mysterious atmosphere, even here the touches, though satisfactory to the eye, are suggestive of nothing; they are characterless; they have none of the peculiar expressiveness

* Of course much depends upon the kind of detail so lost. An artist may generalize the trunk of a tree, where he only loses lines of bark, and do us a kindness; but he must not generalize the details of a champaign, in which there is a history of creation. The full discussion of the subject belongs to a future part of our investigation.

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and meaning by which nature maintains the variety and interest even of what she most conceals. She always tells a story, however hintedly and vaguely; each of her touches is different from all the others; and we feel with every one, that though we cannot tell what it is, it cannot be *any* thing; while even the most dexterous distances of the old masters pretend to secrecy without having anything to conceal, and are ambiguous, not from the concentration of meaning, but from the want of it.

§ 11. The fulness and mystery of Turner's distances.

And now, take up one of Turner's distances, it matters not which or of what kind, drawing or painting, small or great, done thirty years ago or for last year's Academy, as you like; say that of the Mercury and Argus;[1] and look if every fact which I have just been pointing out in nature be not carried out in it. Abundant beyond the power of the eye to embrace or follow, vast and various beyond the power of the mind to comprehend, there is yet not one atom in its whole extent and mass which does not suggest more than it represents; nor does it suggest vaguely, but in such a manner as to prove that the conception of each individual inch of that distance is absolutely clear and complete in the master's mind, a separate picture fully worked out: but yet, clearly and fully as the idea is formed, just so much of it is given, and no more, as nature would have allowed us to feel or see; just so much as would enable a spectator of experience and knowledge to understand almost every minute fragment of separate detail, but appears, to the unpractised and careless eye, just what a distance of nature's own would appear, an unintelligible mass. Not one line out of the millions there is without meaning, yet there is not one which is not affected and disguised by the dazzle and indecision of distance. No form is made out, and yet no form is unknown.

Perhaps the truth of this system of drawing is better to be understood by observing the distant character of rich

[1] [For other references to this picture, see p. 264 n.]

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architecture, than of any other object. Go to the top of Highgate Hill on a clear summer morning at five o'clock, and look at Westminster Abbey. You will receive an impression of a building enriched with multitudinous vertical lines. Try to distinguish one of those lines all the way down from the one next to it: You cannot. Try to count them: You cannot. Try to make out the beginning or end of any one of them: You cannot. Look at it generally, and it is all symmetry and arrangement. Look at it in its parts, and it is all inextricable confusion. Am not I, at this moment, describing a piece of Turner's drawing, with the same words by which I describe nature? And what would one of the old masters have done with such a building as this in the distance? Either he would only have given the shadows of the buttresses, and the light and dark sides of the two towers, and two dots for the windows; or if, more ignorant and more ambitious, he had attempted to render some of the detail, it would have been done by distinct lines, would have been broad caricature of the delicate building, felt at once to be false, ridiculous, and offensive. His most successful effort would only have given us, through his carefully toned atmosphere, the effect of a colossal parish church, without one line of carving on its economic sides. Turner, and Turner only, would follow and render on the canvas that mystery of decided line, that distinct, sharp, visible, but unintelligible and inextricable richness, which, examined part by part, is to the eye nothing but confusion and defeat, which, taken as a whole, is all unity, symmetry, and truth.*

§ 12. *Farther illustrations in architectural drawing.*

* *Vide,* for illustration, Fontainebleau, in the Illustrations to Scott; Vignette at opening of Human Life, in Rogers's Poems; Venice, in the Italy; Château de Blois; the Rouen, and Pont Neuf, Paris, in the Rivers of France. The distances of all the Academy pictures of Venice, especially the Shylock, are most instructive.[1]

[1] [The "Fontainebleau" is in vol. xv. of the *Prose Works;* the Rogers' vignette at p. 63 of the *Poems* (drawing, N.G., 399); "Venice," p. 47 of the *Italy* (drawing, N.G., 391). The French subjects are in *The Seine and the Loire,* Nos. 43, 14 (N.G., 133), or 15, and 34 (N.G., 142). For the "Shylock," see below, p. 364 *n.*]

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Nor is this mode of representation true only with respect to distances. Every object, however near the eye, has something about it which you cannot see, and which brings the mystery of distance even into every part and portion of what we suppose ourselves to see most distinctly. Stand in the Piazza di San Marco, at Venice, as close to the church as you can, without losing sight of the top of it. Look at the capitals of the columns on the second story. You see that they are exquisitely rich, carved all over. Tell me their patterns: You cannot. Tell me the direction of a single line in them: You cannot. Yet you see a multitude of lines, and you have so much feeling of a certain tendency and arrangement in those lines, that you are quite sure the capitals are beautiful, and that they are all different from each other. But I defy you to make out one single line in any one of them. Now go to Canaletto's painting of this church, in the Palazzo Manfrini,[1] taken from the very spot on which you stood. How much has he represented of all this? A black dot under each capital for the shadow, and a yellow one above it for the light. There is not a vestige nor indication of carving or decoration of any sort or kind.

§ 13. *In near objects as well as distances.*

§ 14. *Vacancy and falsehood of Canaletto.*

Very different from this, but erring on the other side, is the ordinary drawing of the architect, who gives the principal lines of the design with delicate clearness and precision, but with no uncertainty or mystery about them; which mystery being removed, all space and size are destroyed with it, and we have a drawing of a model, not of a building. But in the capital lying on the foreground in Turner's Daphne hunting with Leucippus,[2] we have the perfect truth. Not one jag of the acanthus leaves is absolutely visible, the lines are all disorder, but you feel in an instant that all are there. And

[1] [The best pictures in this palace were dispersed in 1856 (see *Stones of Venice*, Venetian index, *s.* Manfrini).]

[2] ["Apollo and Daphne" (1837), No. 520 in the National Gallery; see *Notes on the Turner Gallery* for a description of the picture, and for other references to it see below, pp. 453, 461; *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. xvii. §§ 42, 43; vol. v. pt. vi. ch. x. § 20.]

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so it will invariably be found through every portion of detail in his late and most perfect works.

§ 15. *Still greater fulness and finish in landscape foregrounds.*

But if there be this mystery and inexhaustible finish merely in the more delicate instances of architectural decoration, how much more in the ceaseless and incomparable decoration of nature. The detail of a single weedy bank laughs the carving of ages to scorn. Every leaf and stalk has a design and tracery upon it; every knot of grass an intricacy of shade which the labour of years could never imitate, and which, if such labour could follow it out even to the last fibres of the leaflets, would yet be falsely represented, for, as in all other cases brought forward, it is not clearly seen, but confusedly and mysteriously. That which is nearness for the bank, is distance for its details; and however near it may be, the greater part of those details are still a beautiful incomprehensibility.*

* It is to be remembered, however, that these truths present themselves in all probability under very different phases to individuals of different powers of vision. Many artists who appear to generalize rudely or rashly are perhaps faithfully endeavouring to render the appearance which nature bears to sight of limited range. Others may be led by their singular keenness of sight into inexpedient detail. Works which are painted for effect at a certain distance must be always seen at disadvantage by those whose sight is of different range from the painter's. Another circumstance to which I ought above to have alluded is the scale of the picture; for there are different degrees of generalization, and different necessities of symbolism, belonging to every scale: the stipple of the miniature painter would be offensive on features of the life size, and the leaves which Tintoret may articulate on a canvas of sixty feet by twenty-five, must be generalized by Turner on one of four by three. Another circumstance of some importance is the assumed distance of the foreground; many landscape painters seem to think their nearest foreground is always equally near, whereas its distance from the spectator varies not a little, being always at least its own calculable breadth from side to side as estimated by figures or any other object of known size at the nearest part of it. With Claude almost always; with Turner often, as in the Daphne and Leucippus, this breadth is forty or fifty yards; and as the nearest foreground object *must* then be at least that distance removed, and *may* be much more, it is evident that no completion of close detail is in such cases allowable (see here another proof of Claude's erroneous practice); with Titian and Tintoret, on the contrary, the foreground is rarely more than five or six yards broad, and its objects therefore being only five or six yards distant are entirely detailed.

None of these circumstances, however, in any wise affect the great principle,

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J. Ruskin

Foreground Study.

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Hence, throughout the picture, the expression of space and size is dependent upon obscurity, united with, or rather resultant from, exceeding fulness. We destroy both space and size, either by the vacancy which affords us no measure of space, or by the distinctness which gives us a false one. The distance of Poussin, having no indication of trees, nor of meadows, nor of character of any kind, may be fifty miles off, or may be five: we cannot tell; we have no measure, and in consequence, no vivid impression. But a middle distance of Hobbima's involves a contradiction in terms; it states a distance by perspective, which it contradicts by distinctness of detail.

§ 16. *Space and size are destroyed alike by distinctness and by vacancy.*

A single dusty roll of Turner's brush is more truly expressive of the infinity of foliage, than the niggling of Hobbima[1] could have rendered his canvas, if he had worked on it till doomsday.[2] What Sir J. Reynolds says of the misplaced

the confusion of detail taking place sooner or later in all cases. I ought to have noted, however, that many of the pictures of Turner in which the confused drawing has been least understood, have been luminous *twilights*; and that the uncertainty of twilight is therefore added to that of general distance. In the evenings of the south it not unfrequently happens that objects touched with the reflected light of the western sky continue, even for the space of half an hour after sunset, glowing, ruddy, and intense in colour, and almost as bright as if they were still beneath actual sunshine, even till the moon begins to cast a shadow: but, in spite of this brilliancy of colour, all the details

[1] [Cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vi. ch. v. §§ 7, 8, where this passage is cited and the subject returned to.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 here read as follows:—

"Of all errors, therefore, too much making out is the most vicious; because it in fact involves every other kind of error, denying one-half of the truths to be stated, while it misrepresents those which it pretends to state. He who pretends to draw all the leaves of an oak, denies five while he expresses three, and expresses those three falsely. He alone who defines none, can suggest all. [§ 17. Swift execution, etc. (as in text).] We shall see, hereafter, in examining the qualities of execution, that one of its chiefest attractions is the power of rightly expressing *infinity*; and that the pleasure which we take in the swift strokes of a great master is not so much dependent on the swiftness or decision of them, as on the expression of infinite mystery by the mere breaking, crumbling, or dividing of the touch, which the labour of months could not have reached, if devoted to separate details. One of Landseer's breaking, scratchy touches of light is far more truly expressive of the infinity of hair, than a week's work could make a painting of particular hairs; and a single dusty roll . . . doomsday. And thus while the mind is kept intent upon wholeness of effect, the hand is far more likely to give faithful images of details, than if the mind and hand be both intent on the minutiæ. What Sir J. Reynolds . . ."]

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labour of his Roman acquaintance on separate leaves of foliage, and the certainty he expresses that a man who attended to general character would in five minutes produce a more faithful representation of a tree, than the unfortunate mechanist in as many years, is thus perfectly true and well founded;[1] but this is not because details are undesirable, but because they are best given by swift execution, and because, individually, they cannot be given to all. But it should be observed (though we shall be better able to insist upon this point in future) that much of harm and error has arisen from the supposition and assertions of swift and brilliant historical painters, that the same principles of execution are entirely applicable to landscape, which are right for the figure. The artist who falls into extreme detail in drawing the human form, is apt to become disgusting rather than pleasing. It is more agreeable that[2] the general outline and soft hues of flesh should alone be given, than its hairs, and veins, and lines of intersection. And even the most rapid

§ 17. Swift execution best secures perfection of details.

§ 18. Finish is far more necessary in landscape than in historical subjects.

become ghostly and ill-defined. This is a favourite moment of Turner's, and he invariably characterizes it, not by gloom, but by uncertainty of detail. I have never seen the effect of clear twilight thoroughly rendered by art; that effect in which all details are lost, while intense clearness and light are still felt in the atmosphere, in which nothing is distinctly seen; and yet it is not darkness, far less mist, that is the cause of concealment. Turner's efforts at rendering this effect (as the Wilderness of Engedi, Assos, Château de Blois, Caer-laverock, and others innumerable) have always some slight appearance of mistiness, owing to the indistinctness of details; but it remains to be shown that any closer approximation to the effect is possible.[3]

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[1] ["I remember a landscape painter in Rome, who was known by the name of Studio, from his patience in high finishing, in which he thought the whole excellence of art consisted; so that he once endeavoured, as he said, to represent every individual leaf of a tree. This picture I never saw; but I am very sure that an artist, who looked only at the general character of the species, the order of the branches, and the masses of the foliage, would in a few minutes produce a more true resemblance of trees, than this painter in as many months" (*Discourses*, xi.).]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 read:—

> "It is more agreeable that a nostril or an ear should be suggested by a single dash of the pencil than that they should be made out with microscopic accuracy,—more agreeable that . . ."]

[3] [This footnote was added in the 3rd ed. "Engedi" and "Assos" were engraved in Finden's *Bible*; "Caer-laverock," in vol. iv. of Scott's *Poetical Works*; for "Château de Blois," see plate 85 in vol. v. of *Modern Painters*, and in this vol. *cf.* pp. 315, 336 *n.*, 423.]

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and generalizing expression of the human body, if directed by perfect knowledge, and rigidly faithful in drawing, will commonly omit very little of what is agreeable or impressive.[1] But the exclusively generalizing landscape painter omits the whole of what is valuable in his subject; omits thoughts, designs, and beauties by the million, everything indeed, which can furnish him with variety or expression. A distance in Lincolnshire, or in Lombardy, might both be generalized into such blue and yellow stripes as we see in Poussin; but whatever there is of beauty or character in either, depends altogether on our understanding the details, and feeling the difference between the morasses and ditches of the one, and the rolling sea of mulberry trees of the other. And so in every part of the subject, I have no hesitation in asserting that it is *impossible* to go too finely, or think too much about details in landscape, so that they be rightly arranged and rightly massed; but that it is equally impossible to render anything like the fulness or the space of nature, except by that mystery or obscurity of execution which she herself uses, and in which Turner only has followed her.[2]

§ 19. *Recapitulation of the section.*

We have now rapidly glanced at such general truths of nature as can be investigated without much knowledge of what is beautiful. Questions of arrangement, massing, and generalization, I prefer leaving untouched, until we know something about details, and something about what is beautiful. All that is desirable, even in these mere technical and artificial points, is based upon truths and habits of nature; but we cannot understand those truths until we are acquainted with the specific forms and

[1] [For "impressive," eds. 1 and 2 read, "impressive; it will lose only what is monotonous and uninteresting, if not disagreeable."]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 continue thus:—

"And thus we have two great classes of error in landscape painting: the first, the attempting to give all details distinctly, which is the error of children, mechanics, and the Dutch school; the second, the omitting details altogether, which is commonly the error of an impetuous, intellectual, but uncultivated mind, and is found in whatever is best of the Italian school. (Claude's foregrounds come under the same category with the Dutch.) Both destroy space and beauty, but the first error is a falsehood, the second only an imperfection."]

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minor details which they affect, or out of which they arise. I shall, therefore, proceed to examine the invaluable and essential truths of specific character and form; briefly and imperfectly, indeed, as needs must be, but yet at length sufficient to enable the reader to pursue, if he will, the subject for himself.[1]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add the following:—

"Let me, however, point back for a moment to the result of our present examination of general truths. We have found the old masters excel us in one particular quality of colour—probably the result merely of some technical secret, and in one deceptive effect of tone, gained at the expense of a thousand falsehoods and omissions. We have found them false in aërial perspective, false in colour, false in chiaroscuro, false in space, false in detail; and we have found one of our modern artists faithful in every point, and victorious in every struggle, and all of them aiming at the highest class of truths. For which is the most important truth in a painting—for instance, of St. Mark's at Venice,—the exact quality of relief against the sky, which it shares with every hovel and brick-kiln in Italy, or the intricacy of detail and brilliancy of colour which distinguish it from every other building in the world? Or with respect to the street of Poussin, is it of more importance that we should be told the exact pitch of blackness which its chimneys assume against the sky, or that we should perceive the thousands of intricate and various incidents which in nature would have covered every cottage with history of Italian life and character? Our feelings might answer for us in an instant; but let us use our determined tests. The one truth is uncharacteristic, unhistorical, and of the secondary class; the others are characteristic, historical, and of the primary class. How incalculably is the balance already in favour of modern art!"]

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SECTION III

OF TRUTH OF SKIES[1]

CHAPTER I

OF THE OPEN SKY

§ 1. The peculiar adaptation of the sky to the pleasing and teaching of man.

It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky. It is the part of creation in which nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him and teaching him, than in any other of her works, and it is just the part in which we least attend to her. There are not many of her other works in which some more material or essential purpose than the mere pleasing of man is not answered by every part of their organization; but every essential purpose of the sky might, so far as we know, be answered, if once in three days, or thereabouts, a great, ugly, black rain-cloud were brought up over the blue, and everything well watered, and so all left blue again till next time, with perhaps a film of morning and evening mist for dew. And instead of this, there is not a moment of any day of our lives, when nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure.[2] And every

[1] [§§ 1, 2, and 3 of this chapter are § 21 in *Frondes Agrestes.*]

[2] [In a footnote here to *Frondes Agrestes* (1875), Ruskin wrote :—

"At least, I thought so, when I was four-and-twenty. At five-and-fifty, I fancy that it is just possible there may be other creatures in the universe to be pleased, or,—it may be,—displeased, by the weather."]

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man, wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them; he injures them by his presence, he ceases to feel them if he be always with them: but the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not

> "Too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food;"[1]

it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for soothing it and purifying it from its dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful, never the same for two moments together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its infinity, its appeal to what is immortal in us is as distinct, as its ministry of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal is essential.[2] And yet we never attend to it, we never make it a subject of thought, but as it has to do with our animal sensations: we look upon all by which it speaks to us more clearly than to brutes, upon all which bears witness to the intention of the Supreme that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew which we share with the weed and the worm, only as a succession of meaningless and monotonous accident, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of watchfulness, or a glance of admiration. If in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity, we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet; and another, it has been windy; and another, it has been warm. Who, among the whole chattering crowd, can tell me of the forms and the precipices of the chain of tall

§ 2. The carelessness with which its lessons are received.

[1] [For another reference to this piece by Wordsworth ("She was a phantom of delight"), see *Sesame and Lilies*, § 71.]

[2] [For "its appeal to what is immortal . . . mortal is essential," eds. 1 and 2 read, "it is surely meant for the chief teacher of what is immortal in us, as it is the chief minister of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal."]

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white mountains that girded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves? All has passed, unregretted as unseen; or if the apathy be ever shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is gross, or what is extraordinary;[1] and yet it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice. They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature, which can only be addressed through lamp-black and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, and the calm, and the perpetual; that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood; things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally: which are never wanting, and never repeated; which are to be found always, yet each found but once; it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given. These are what the artist of highest aim must study; it is these, by the combination of which his ideal is to be created; these, of which so little notice is ordinarily taken by common observers, that I fully believe, little as people in general are concerned with art, more of their ideas of sky are derived from pictures than from reality; and that if we could examine the conception formed in the minds of most educated persons when we talk of clouds, it would frequently be

§ 3. The most essential of these lessons are the gentlest.

§ 4. Many of our ideas of sky altogether conventional.

[1] [For "extraordinary; and yet it is not," eds. 1 and 2 read :—
"extraordinary, when the heavens force themselves on our attention with some blaze of fire, or blackness of thunder, or awaken the curiosity of idleness, because the sun looks like a frying-pan, or the moon like a fool.
"But it is not . . ."]

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found composed of fragments of blue and white reminiscences of the old masters.[1]

I shall enter upon the examination of what is true in sky at greater length, because it is the only part of a picture of which all, if they will, may be competent judges. What I may have to assert respecting the rocks of Salvator, or the boughs of Claude, I can scarcely prove, except to those whom I can immure for a month or two in the fastnesses of the Apennines, or guide in their summer walks again and again through the ravines of Sorrento. But what I say of the sky can be brought to an immediate test by all, and I write the more decisively, in the hope that it may be so.

§ 5. Nature and essential qualities of the open blue.

Let us begin then with the simple open blue of the sky. This is of course the colour of the pure atmospheric air, not the aqueous vapour, but the pure azote and oxygen, and it is the total colour of the whole mass of that air between us and the void of space. It is modified by the varying quantity of aqueous vapour suspended in it, whose colour, in its most imperfect and therefore most visible state of solution, is pure white (as in steam); which receives, like any other white, the warm hues of the rays of the sun, and, according to its quantity and imperfect solution, makes the sky paler, and at the same time more or less grey, by mixing warm tones with its blue. This grey aqueous vapour, when very decided, becomes mist, and when local, cloud. Hence the sky is to be considered as a transparent blue liquid, in which, at various elevations, clouds are suspended, those clouds being themselves only particular visible spaces of a substance with which the whole mass of this liquid is more or less impregnated. Now, we all know this

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 continue :—

"representative of round, cushion-like swellings and protuberances associated in a very anomalous and unintelligible manner, with legs, arms, and cart-wheels; or if this be saying too much, at least the beauty of the natural forms is so little studied, that such representations are received either for truth, or for something better than truth. Whatever there may be in them of the poetical, I believe I shall be able to show that there is a slight violation of the true.

"And I shall enter . . . judges. Its other component parts of subject can be open to the criticism of comparatively but few. What I may . . ."]

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perfectly well, and yet we so far forget it in practice, that we little notice the constant connection kept up by nature between her blue and her clouds; and we are not offended by the constant habit of the old masters, of considering the blue sky as totally distinct in its nature, and far separated from the vapours which float in it. With them, cloud is cloud, and blue is blue, and no kind of connection between them is ever hinted at. The sky is thought of as a clear, high, material dome, the clouds as separate bodies suspended beneath it; and in consequence, however delicate and exquisitely removed in tone their skies may be, you always look *at* them, not *through* them. Now if there be one characteristic of the sky more valuable or necessary to be rendered than another, it is that which Wordsworth has given in the second[1] book of the Excursion:

§ 6. *Its connection with clouds.*

§ 7. *Its exceeding depth.*

> "The chasm of sky above my head
> Is Heaven's profoundest azure; no domain
> For fickle, short-lived clouds, to occupy,
> Or to pass through; but rather an *abyss*
> In which the everlasting stars abide,
> And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might tempt
> The curious eye to look for them by day."

And in his American Notes, I remember Dickens notices the same truth, describing himself as lying drowsily on the barge deck, looking not at, but *through* the sky.[2] And if you look intensely at the pure blue of a serene sky, you will see that there is a variety and fulness in its very repose. It is not flat dead colour, but a deep, quivering, transparent body of penetrable air, in which you trace or imagine short falling spots of deceiving light, and dim shades, faint veiled vestiges of dark vapour; and it is this trembling transparency which our great modern master has especially aimed at and given. His blue is never laid on in smooth coats, but in breaking, mingling, melting hues, a

§ 8. *These qualities are especially given by Turner.*

[1] [So in all the eds.; the passage comes, however, from the *third* book.]

[2] ["The exquisite beauty of the opening day, when light came gleaming off everything; the lazy motion of the boat, when one lay idly on the deck, looking through, rather than at, the deep blue sky . . ." (*American Notes*, 1842, vol. ii. p. 62).]

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quarter of an inch of which, cut off from all the rest of the picture, is still *spacious*, still infinite and immeasurable in depth. It is a painting of the air, something into which you can see, through the parts which are near you, into those which are far off; something which has no surface and through which we can plunge far and farther, and without stay or end, into the profundity of space;—whereas, with all the old landscape painters except Claude, you may indeed go a long way before you come to the sky, but you will strike hard against it at last. A perfectly genuine and untouched sky of Claude is indeed most perfect, and beyond praise, in all qualities of air; though even with him, I often feel rather that there is a great deal of pleasant air between me and the firmament, than that the firmament itself is only air. I do not mean, however, to say a word against such skies as that of the Enchanted Castle, or that marked 30 in the National Gallery,[1] or one or two which I remember at Rome; but how little and by how few these fine passages of Claude are appreciated, is sufficiently proved by the sufferance of such villainous and unpalliated copies as we meet with all over Europe, like the Marriage of Isaac, in our own Gallery, to remain under his name. In fact, I do not remember above ten pictures of Claude's, in which the skies, whether repainted or altogether copies, or perhaps from Claude's hand, but carelessly laid in, like that marked 241, Dulwich Gallery,[2] were not fully as feelingless and false as those of other masters; while, with the Poussins, there are no favourable exceptions. Their skies are systematically wrong; take, for instance, the sky of the Sacrifice of Isaac.[3] It is here high

§ 9. And by Claude.

§ 10. Total absence of them in Poussin. Physical errors in his general treatment of open sky.

[1] [The "Enchanted Castle" (Liber Veritatis, 162) is in the collection of Lady Wantage ("Old Masters" at the Royal Academy, 1888). The lines of Keats in a letter to his friend, J. R. Reynolds ("Teignmouth")—"You know the enchanted castle,—it doth stand," etc., were suggested by the picture. No. 30 in the National Gallery is "Seaport: St. Ursula." For the "Marriage of Isaac" (No. 12), see above, p. 41 *n.*]

[2] [No. 241 in the Dulwich Gallery is not a Claude. The number was probably a misprint for No. 244 (now No. 205), for which see below, p. 443.]

[3] [No. 31 in the National Gallery, by G. Poussin. For other references to the picture, see above, pp. 282, 332; and below, p. 376.]

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noon, as is shown by the shadow of the figures; and what sort of colour is the sky at the top of the picture? Is it pale and grey with heat, full of sunshine, and unfathomable in depth? On the contrary, it is of a pitch of darkness which, except on Mont Blanc or Chimborazo, is as purely impossible as colour can be. He might as well have painted it coal black; and it is laid on with a dead coat of flat paint, having no one quality or resemblance of sky about it. It cannot have altered, because the land horizon is as delicate and tender in tone as possible, and is evidently unchanged; and to complete the absurdity of the whole thing, this colour holds its own, without graduation or alteration, to within three or four degrees of the horizon, where it suddenly becomes bold and unmixed yellow. Now the horizon at noon may be yellow when the whole sky is covered with dark clouds, and only *one* open streak of light left in the distance from which the whole light proceeds; but with a clear open sky, and opposite the sun, at noon, such a yellow horizon as this is physically impossible. Even supposing that the upper part of the sky were pale and warm, and that the transition from the one hue to the other were effected imperceptibly and gradually, as is invariably the case in reality, instead of taking place within a space of two or three degrees; even then, this gold yellow would be altogether absurd: but as it is, we have in this sky (and it is a fine picture, one of the best of Gaspar's that I know) a notable example of the truth of the old masters, two impossible colours impossibly united! Find such a colour in Turner's noon-day zenith as the blue at the top, or such a colour at a noon-day horizon as the yellow at the bottom, or such a connection of any colours whatsoever as that in the centre, and then you may talk about his being false to nature if you will. Nor is this a solitary instance; it is Gaspar Poussin's favourite and characteristic effect. I remember twenty such, most of them worse than this, in the downright surface and opacity of blue. Again,[1] look at the large Cuyp in the

[1] [For "Again, look," eds. 1 and 2 read, "And, by-the-bye, while we are talking of graduations of colour, look at . . ."]

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Dulwich Gallery, which Mr. Hazlitt considers the "finest in the world," and of which he very complimentarily says, "The tender green of the valleys, the gleaming lake, the purple light of the hills, have an effect like the *down* on an unripe nectarine"![1] I ought to have apologized before now, for not having studied sufficiently in Covent Garden to be provided with terms of correct and classical criticism. One of my friends begged me to observe the other day, that Claude was "pulpy;" another added the yet more gratifying information that he was "juicy;" and it is now happily discovered that Cuyp is "downy." Now I dare say that the sky of this first-rate Cuyp is very like an unripe nectarine: all that I have to say about it is, that it is exceedingly unlike a sky. The blue remains unchanged and ungraduated over three-fourths of it, down to the horizon; while the sun, in the left-hand corner, is surrounded with a halo, first of yellow, and then of crude pink, both being separated from each other, and the last from the blue, as sharply as the belts of a rainbow, and both together not ascending ten degrees in the sky. Now it is difficult to conceive how any man calling himself a painter could impose such a thing on the public, and still more how the public can receive it, as a representation of that sunset purple which invariably extends its influence to the zenith, so that there is no pure blue anywhere, but a purple increasing in purity gradually down to its point of greatest intensity (about forty-five degrees from the horizon), and then melting imperceptibly into the gold, the three colours extending their influence over the whole sky; so that throughout the whole sweep of the heaven, there is no one spot where the colour is not in an equal state of transition, passing from gold into orange, from that into rose, from that into purple, from that into blue, with absolute equality of change, so that in no place can it be said, "Here it changes," and in no place, "Here it is unchanging." This is invariably the case.

§ 11. *Errors of Cuyp in graduation of colour.*

[1] [No. 169 (now No. 128), "Cattle and Figures near a River, with Mountains." See *Criticisms on Art*, by William Hazlitt, 1843, p. 24 (where the picture is erroneously called No. 9).]

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There is no such thing—there never was, and never will be such a thing, while God's heaven remains as it is made—as a serene, sunset sky, with its purple and rose in *belts* about the sun.[1]

Such bold broad examples of ignorance as these would soon set aside all the claims of the professed landscape painters to truth, with whatever delicacy of colour or manipulation they may be disguised. But there are some skies, of the Dutch school, in which clearness and coolness have been aimed at, instead of depth; and some introduced merely as backgrounds to the historical subjects of the older Italians, which there is no matching in modern times; one would think angels had painted them, for all is now clay and oil in comparison. It seems as if we had totally lost the art, for surely otherwise, however little our painters might aim at it or feel it, they would touch the chord sometimes by accident; but they never do, and the mechanical incapacity is still more strongly evidenced by the muddy struggles of the unhappy Germans,[2] who have the feeling, partially strained, artificial, and diseased, indeed, but still genuine enough to bring out the tone, if they had the mechanical means and technical knowledge. But, however they were obtained, the clear tones of this kind of the older Italians are glorious and enviable in the highest degree; and we shall show, when we come to speak of the beautiful, that they are one of the most just grounds of the fame of the old masters.

§ 12. The exceeding value of the skies of the early Italian and Dutch schools. Their qualities are unattainable in modern times.

But there is a series of phenomena connected with the open blue of the sky, which we must take especial notice of, as it is of constant occurrence in the works of Turner and Claude, the effects, namely, of visible sunbeams. It will be necessary for us

§ 13. Phenomena of visible sunbeams. Their nature and cause.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add :—
"Yet people call such an absurdity as this 'truth;' and laugh at Turner, because he paints crimson clouds."]

[2] [Elsewhere Ruskin refers to modern German art as "the school of Mud"; see letter to E. S. Dallas (1860).]

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thoroughly to understand the circumstances under which such effects take place.[1]

Aqueous vapour or mist, suspended in the atmosphere, becomes visible exactly as dust does in the air of a room. In the shadows you not only cannot see the dust itself, because unillumined, but you can see other objects through the dust without obscurity, the air being thus actually rendered more transparent by a deprivation of light. Where a sunbeam enters, every particle of dust becomes visible, and a palpable interruption to the sight; so that a transverse sunbeam is a real obstacle to the vision, you cannot see things clearly through it.

In the same way, wherever vapour is illuminated by transverse rays, there it becomes visible as a whiteness more or less affecting the purity of the blue, and destroying it exactly in proportion to the degree of illumination. But where vapour is in shade, it has very little effect on the sky, perhaps making it a little deeper and greyer than it otherwise would be, but not itself, unless very dense, distinguishable or felt as mist.[2]

§ 14. They are only illuminated mist, and cannot appear when the sky is free from vapour, nor when it is without clouds.

The appearance of mist or whiteness in the blue of the sky is thus a circumstance which more or less accompanies sunshine, and which, supposing the quantity of vapour constant, is greatest in the brightest sunlight. When there are no clouds in the sky, the whiteness, as it affects the whole sky equally, is not particularly noticeable. But when there are clouds between us and the sun, the sun being low, those clouds cast shadows along and through the mass of suspended vapour. Within the space

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add a footnote :—

"I shall often be obliged, in the present portion of the work, to enter somewhat tediously into the examination of the physical causes of phenomena, in order that in the future, when speaking of the beautiful, I may not be obliged to run every now and then into physics, but may be able to assert a thing fearlessly to be right or wrong, false or true, with reference for proof to principles before developed. I must be allowed, therefore, at present, to spend sometimes almost more time in the investigation of nature than in the criticism of art."]

[2] [The two paragraphs, "Aqueous vapour . . . felt as mist," are § 23 of *Frondes Agrestes*.]

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of these shadows, the vapour, as above stated, becomes transparent and invisible, and the sky appears of a pure blue. But where the sunbeams strike, the vapour becomes visible in the form of the beams, occasioning those radiating shafts of light which are one of the most valuable and constant accompaniments of a low sun. The denser the mist, the more distinct and sharp-edged will these rays be; when the air is very clear, they are mere vague, flushing, gradated passages of light; when it is very thick, they are keen-edged and decisive in a high degree.

We see then, first, that a quantity of mist dispersed through the whole space of the sky is necessary to this phenomenon; and secondly, that what we usually think of as beams of greater brightness than the rest of the sky are, in reality, only a part of that sky in its natural state of illumination, cut off and rendered brilliant by the shadows from the clouds, these shadows being in reality the source of the appearance of beams, so that, therefore, no part of the sky can present such an appearance, except when there are broken clouds between it and the sun; and lastly, that the shadows cast from such clouds are not necessarily grey or dark, but very nearly of the natural pure blue of a sky destitute of vapour.

§ 15. *Erroneous tendency in the representation of such phenomena by the old masters.*

Now, as it has been proved that the appearance of beams can only take place in a part of the sky which has clouds between it and the sun, it is evident that no appearance of beams can ever begin from the orb itself, except when there is a cloud or solid body of some kind between us and it; but that such appearances will almost invariably begin on the dark side of some of the clouds around it, the orb itself remaining the centre of a broad blaze of united light. Wordsworth has given us, in two lines, the only circumstances under which rays can ever appear to originate in the orb itself:

> "But rays of light,
> Now *suddenly* diverging from the orb
> *Retired behind the mountain tops, or veiled*
> *By the dense air,* shot upwards."
>
> —*Excursion,* book ix.

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And Turner has given us the effect magnificently in the Dartmouth of the River Scenery.[1] It is frequent among the old masters, and constant in Claude; though the latter, from drawing his beams too fine, represents the effect upon the dazzled eye rather than the light which actually exists, and approximates very closely to the ideal which we see in the sign of the Rising Sun; nay, I am nearly sure that I remember cases in which he has given us the diverging beam without any cloud or hill interfering with the orb. It may, perhaps, be somewhat difficult to say how far it is allowable to represent that kind of ray which is seen by the dazzled eye. It is very certain that we never look towards a bright sun without seeing glancing rays issue from it; but it is equally certain that those rays are no more real existences than the red and blue circles which we see after having been so dazzled, and that if we are to represent the rays we ought also to cover our sky with pink and blue circles. I should on the whole consider it utterly false in principle to represent the visionary beam, and that we ought only to show that which has actual existence. Such we find to be the constant practice of Turner. Even where, owing to interposed clouds, he has beams appearing to issue from the orb itself, they are broad bursts of light, not spiky rays; and his more usual practice is to keep all near the sun in one simple blaze of intense light, and from the first clouds to throw beams to the zènith, though he often does not permit any appearance of rays until close to the zenith itself. Open at the 80th page of the Illustrated edition of Rogers's Poems. You have there a sky blazing with sunbeams; but they all begin a long way from the sun, and they are accounted for by a mass of dense clouds surrounding the orb itself. Turn to the 7th page. Behind the old oak, where the sun is supposed to be, you have only a blaze of undistinguished light;

§ 16. *The rays which appear in the dazzled eye should not be represented.*

§ 17. *The practice of Turner. His keen perception of the more delicate phenomena of rays.*

[1] [In the *Rivers of England* (1824). The drawing of Dartmouth is No. 163 in the National Gallery.]

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but up on the left, over the edge of the cloud, on its dark side, the sunbeam. Turn to page 192,—blazing rays again, but all beginning where the clouds do, not one can you trace to the sun; and observe how carefully the long shadow on the mountain is accounted for by the dim dark promontory projecting out near the sun.[1] I need not multiply examples: you will find various modifications and uses of these effects throughout his works. But you will not find a single trace of them in the old masters. They give you the rays issuing from behind black clouds, because they are a coarse and common effect which could not possibly escape their observation, and because they are easily imitated. They give you the spiky shafts issuing from the orb itself, because these are partially symbolical of light, and assist a tardy imagination, as two or three rays scratched round the sun with a pen would, though they would be rays of darkness instead of light.* But of the most beautiful phenomenon of all, the appearance of the delicate ray far in the sky, threading its way among the thin,

§ 18. *The total absence of any evidence of such perception in the works of the old masters.*

* I have left this passage as it stood originally, because it is right as far as it goes; yet it speaks with too little respect of symbolism, which is often of the highest use in religious art, and in some measure is allowable in all art. In the works of almost all the greatest masters there are portions which are explanatory rather than representative, and typical rather than imitative; nor could these be parted with but at infinite loss. Note, with respect to the present question, the daring black sunbeams of Titian, in his woodcut of St. Francis receiving the Stigmata; and compare here Part III. sec. ii. chap. iv. § 18, chap. v. § 13. And though I believe that I am right in considering all such symbolism as out of place in pure landscape, and in attributing that of Claude to ignorance or inability, and not to feeling, yet I praise Turner not so much for his absolute refusal to represent the spiky rays about the sun, as for his perceiving and rendering that which Claude never perceived, the multitudinous presence of radiating light in the upper sky, and on all its countless ranks of subtle cloud.[2]

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[1] [The original drawings for the vignettes referred to are in the National Gallery—No. 230, "Tornaro" (p. 80); for this, *cf.* below, p. 364, and see *Catalogue of the Drawings and Sketches by Turner in the National Gallery* (Group ix.). No. 226, "Twilight" (p. 7). No. 242, "The Alps at Daybreak" (p. 194, not 192); for this, *cf.* next chapter, p. 366, and p. 433.]

[2] [This note was added in the 3rd ed. For other references to the place of symbolism in art, see *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. viii. § 6, and *Lectures on Art*, § 63.]

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transparent clouds, while all around the sun is unshadowed fire, there is no record nor example whatsoever in their works. It was too delicate and spiritual for them; probably their blunt and feelingless eyes never perceived it in nature, and their untaught imaginations were not likely to originate it in the study.[1]

§ 19. *Truth of the skies of modern drawings.*

Little is to be said of the skies of our other landscape artists. In paintings, they are commonly toneless, crude, and wanting in depth and transparency; but in drawings, some very perfect and delicate examples have been produced by various members of the old Water-Colour Society, and one or two others: but with respect to the qualities of which we are at present speaking, it is not right to compare drawings with paintings, as the wash or sponging, or other artifices peculiar to water colour, are capable of producing an appearance of quality which it needs much higher art to produce in oils.

§ 20. *Recapitulation. The best skies of the ancients are, in quality, inimitable, but in rendering of various truth, childish.*

Taken generally, the open skies of the moderns are inferior in quality to picked and untouched skies of the greatest of the ancients, but far superior to the average class of pictures which we have every day fathered upon their reputation. Nine or ten skies of Claude might be named which are not to be contended with in their way, and as many of Cuyp. Teniers has given some very wonderful passages, and the clearness of the early Italian and Dutch schools is beyond all imitation. But the common blue daubing which we hear every day in our best galleries attributed to Claude and Cuyp, and the genuine skies of Salvator, and of both the Poussins, are not to be compared for an instant with the best works of modern times, even in quality and transparency; while in all matters requiring delicate observation or accurate science,—in all which

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add:—
"Of the perfect and deeply-based knowledge of such phenomena which is traceable in all works of Turner, we shall see farther instances in the following chapter."]

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was not attainable by technicalities of art, and which depended upon the artist's knowledge and understanding of nature, — all the works of the ancients are alike the productions of mere children, sometimes manifesting great sensibility, but proving at the same time feebly developed intelligence, and ill regulated observation.

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CHAPTER II

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS:—FIRST OF THE REGION OF THE CIRRUS

§ 1. Difficulty of ascertaining wherein the truth of clouds consists.

OUR next subject of investigation must be the specific character of clouds, a species of truth which is especially neglected by artists; first, because as it is within the limits of possibility that a cloud may assume almost any form, it is difficult to point out, and not always easy to feel, wherein error consists; and secondly, because it is totally impossible to study the forms of clouds from nature with care and accuracy, as a change in the subject takes place between every touch of the following pencil, and parts of an outline sketched at different instants cannot harmonize, nature never having intended them to come together. Still if artists were more in the habit of sketching clouds rapidly, and as accurately as possible in the outline, from nature, instead of daubing down what they call "effects" with the brush, they would soon find there is more beauty about their forms than can be arrived at by any random felicity of invention, however brilliant, and more essential character than can be violated without incurring the charge of falsehood, —falsehood as direct and definite, though not as traceable, as error in the less varied features of organic form.

§ 2. Variation of their character at different elevations. The three regions to which they may conveniently be considered as belonging.

The first and most important character of clouds is dependent on the different altitudes at which they are formed. The atmosphere may be conveniently considered as divided into three spaces, each inhabited by clouds of specific character altogether different, though, in reality, there is no distinct limit fixed between them by nature, clouds being formed at *every* altitude, and partaking, according to their altitude, more or less of the characters of the upper or lower regions. The scenery of the sky is thus formed of an

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infinitely graduated series of systematic forms of cloud, each of which has its own region in which alone it is formed, and each of which has specific characters which can only be properly determined by comparing them as they are found clearly distinguished by intervals of considerable space. I shall therefore consider the sky as divided into three regions: the upper region, or region of the cirrus; the central region, or region of the stratus; the lower region, or the region of the rain-cloud.

§ 3. *Extent of the upper region.*

The clouds which I wish to consider as included in the upper region, never touch even the highest mountains of Europe, and may therefore be looked upon as never formed below an elevation of at least 15,000 feet; they are the motionless multitudinous lines of delicate vapour with which the blue of the open sky is commonly streaked or speckled after several days of fine weather. I must be pardoned for giving a detailed description of their specific characters, as they are of constant occurrence in the works of modern artists, and I shall have occasion to speak frequently of them in future parts of the work. Their chief characters are:

§ 4. *The symmetrical arrangement of its clouds.*

First, Symmetry. They are nearly always arranged in some definite and evident order, commonly in long ranks reaching sometimes from the zenith to the horizon, each rank composed of an infinite number of transverse bars of about the same length, each bar thickest in the middle, and terminating in a traceless vaporous point at each side; the ranks are in the direction of the wind, and the bars of course at right angles to it; these latter are commonly slightly bent in the middle. Frequently two systems of this kind, indicative of two currents of wind, at different altitudes, intersect each other, forming a network. Another frequent arrangement is in groups of excessively fine, silky, parallel fibres, commonly radiating, or having a tendency to radiate, from one of their extremities, and terminating in a plumy sweep at the other; these are vulgarly known as "mares' tails."[1]

[1] [An expression common in nautical literature: see, *e.g.*, W. C. Russell's *Jack's Courtship*, ch. 22 ("a light blue sky and a crescent of mares' tails over the mastheads").]

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The plumy and expanded extremity of these is often bent upwards, sometimes back and up again, giving an appearance of great flexibility and unity at the same time; as if the clouds were tough, and would hold together however bent. The narrow extremity is invariably turned to the wind, and the fibres are parallel with its direction. The upper clouds always fall into some modification of one or other of these arrangements. They thus differ from all other clouds, in having a plan and system; whereas other clouds, though there are certain laws which they cannot break, have yet perfect freedom from anything like a relative and general system of government. The upper clouds are to the lower, what soldiers on parade are to a mixed multitude: no men walk on their heads or their hands, and so there are certain laws which no clouds violate; but there is nothing, except in the upper clouds, resembling symmetrical discipline.

§ 5. *Their exceeding delicacy.*

Secondly, Sharpness of Edge. The edges of the bars of the upper clouds which are turned to the wind, are often the sharpest which the sky shows; no outline whatever of any other kind of cloud, however marked and energetic, ever approaches the delicate decision of these edges. The outline of a black thunder-cloud is striking, from the great energy of the colour or shade of the general mass; but as a line, it is soft and indistinct, compared with the edge of the cirrus in a clear sky with a brisk breeze. On the other hand, the edge of the bar turned away from the wind is always soft, often imperceptible, melting into the blue interstice between it and its next neighbour. Commonly, the sharper one edge is, the softer is the other; and the clouds look flat, and as if they slipped over each other like the scales of a fish. When both edges are soft, as is always the case when the sky is clear and windless, the cloud looks solid, round, and fleecy.

§ 6. *Their number.*

Thirdly, Multitude. The delicacy of these vapours is sometimes carried into such an infinity of division, that no other sensation of number that the earth or heaven can give is so impressive. Number is always most

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felt when it is symmetrical (*vide* Burke on "Sublime," part ii. sect. 8), and, therefore, no sea-waves nor fresh leaves make their number so evident or so impressive as these vapours. Nor is nature content with an infinity of bars or lines alone; each bar is in its turn severed into a number of small undulatory masses, more or less connected according to the violence of the wind. When this division is merely affected by undulation, the cloud exactly resembles sea-sand ribbed by the tide; but when the division amounts to real separation we have the mottled or mackerel skies. Commonly, the greater the division of its bars, the broader and more shapeless is the rank or field, so that in the mottled sky it is lost altogether, and we have large irregular fields of equal size, masses like flocks of sheep; such clouds are three or four thousand feet below the legitimate cirrus. I have seen them cast a shadow on Mont Blanc at sunset, so that they must descend nearly to within fifteen thousand feet of the earth.

§ 7. Causes of their peculiarly delicate colouring.

Fourthly, Purity of Colour. The nearest of these clouds, those over the observer's head, being at least three miles above him, and the greater number of those which enter the ordinary sphere of vision, farther from him still, their dark sides are much greyer and cooler than those of other clouds, owing to their distance. They are composed of the purest aqueous vapour, free from all foulness of earthy gases, and of this in the lightest and most ethereal state in which it can be, to be visible. Farther, they receive the light of the sun in a state of far greater intensity than lower objects, the beams being transmitted to them through atmospheric air far less dense, and wholly unaffected by mist, smoke, or any other impurity. Hence their colours are more pure and vivid, and their white less sullied than those of any other clouds.

§ 8. Their variety of form.

Lastly, Variety. Variety is never so conspicuous, as when it is united with symmetry. The perpetual change of form in other clouds is monotonous in its very dissimilarity, nor is difference striking where no connection is implied; but if through a range of barred clouds crossing half

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the heaven, all governed by the same forces and falling into one general form, there be yet a marked and evident dissimilarity between each member of the great mass,—one more finely drawn, the next more delicately moulded, the next more gracefully bent, each broken into differently modelled and variously numbered groups,—the variety is doubly striking, because contrasted with the perfect symmetry of which it forms a part. Hence, the importance of the truth, that nature never lets one of the members of even her most disciplined groups of cloud be like another; but though each is adapted for the same function, and in its great features resembles all the others, not one, out of the millions with which the sky is chequered, is without a separate beauty and character, appearing to have had distinct thought occupied in its conception, and distinct forces in its production; and in addition to this perpetual invention, visible in each member of each system, we find systems of separate cloud intersecting each other, the sweeping lines mingled and interwoven with the rigid bars, these in their turn melting into banks of sand-like ripple and flakes of drifted and irregular foam; under all, perhaps the massy outline of some lower cloud moves heavily across the motionless buoyancy of the upper lines, and indicates at once their elevation and their repose.

§ 9. Total absence of even the slightest effort at their representation in ancient landscape.

Such are the great attributes of the upper cloud region; whether they are beautiful, valuable, or impressive, it is not our present business to decide, nor to endeavour to discover the reason of the somewhat remarkable fact, that the whole field of ancient landscape art affords, as far as we remember, but one instance of any effort whatever to represent the character of this cloud region. That one instance is the landscape of Rubens in our own Gallery,[1] in which the mottled or fleecy sky is given with perfect truth and exquisite beauty. To this should perhaps be added, some of the backgrounds of the historical painters, where horizontal lines were required,

[1] [No. 66, "A Landscape: Autumn Morning," with the Castle of Stein in the background; see above, p. 323 *n.*]

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and a few level bars of white or warm colour cross the serenity of the blue. These, as far as they go, are often very perfect, and the elevation and repose of their effect might, we should have thought, have pointed out to the landscape painters that there was something to be made out of the high clouds. Not one of them, however, took the hint. To whom, among them all, can we look for the slightest realization of the fine and faithful descriptive passage of the Excursion, already alluded to?[1]—

> "But rays of light,
> Now suddenly diverging from the orb
> Retired behind the mountain tops, or veiled
> By the dense air, shot upwards to the crown
> Of the blue firmament—aloft, and wide:
> And multitudes of little floating clouds,
> Through their ethereal texture pierced—ere we,
> Who saw, of change were conscious—had become
> Vivid as fire; clouds separately poised,—
> Innumerable multitude of forms
> Scattered through half the circle of the sky;
> And giving back, and shedding each on each,
> With prodigal communion, the bright hues
> Which from the unapparent fount of glory
> They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.
> That which the heavens displayed the liquid deep
> Repeated; but with unity sublime."

§ 10. The intense and constant study of them by Turner.

There is but one master whose works we can think of while we read this, one alone has taken notice of the neglected upper sky; it is his peculiar and favourite field; he has watched its every modification, and given its every phase and feature; at all hours, in all seasons, he has followed its passions and its changes, and has brought down and laid open to the world another apocalypse of Heaven.

There is scarcely a painting of Turner's in which serenity of sky and intensity of light are aimed at together, in which these clouds are not used, though there are not two cases in which they are used altogether alike. Sometimes they are crowded together in masses of mingling light, as in the

[1] [Above, sec. iii. ch. i. § 15; from the *Excursion*, book ix.]

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Shylock;[1] every part and atom sympathizing in that continuous expression of slow movement which Shelley has so beautifully touched:

> "Underneath the young grey dawn
> A multitude of dense, white, fleecy clouds
> Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains,
> *Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.*"[2]

At other times they are blended with the sky itself, felt only here and there by a ray of light calling them into existence out of its misty shade, as in the Mercury and Argus; sometimes, where great repose is to be given, they appear in a few detached, equal, rounded flakes, which seem to hang motionless, each like the shadow of the other, in the deep blue of the zenith, as in the Acro-Corinth;[3] sometimes they are scattered in fiery flying fragments, each burning with separate energy, as in the Téméraire; sometimes woven together with fine threads of intermediate darkness, melting into the blue, as in the Napoleon. But in all cases the exquisite manipulation of the master gives to each atom of the multitude its own character and expression. Though they be countless as leaves, each has its portion of light, its shadow, its reflex, its peculiar and separating form.

§ 11. *His vignette, Sunrise on the Sea.*

Take, for instance, the illustrated edition of Rogers's Poems,* and open it at the 80th page,[4] and observe how every attribute which I have pointed out in the upper sky is there rendered with the faithfulness of a mirror; the long lines of parallel bars, the delicate

* I use this work frequently for illustration, because it is the only one I know in which the engraver has worked with delicacy enough to give the real forms and touches of Turner. I can reason from these plates (in questions of form only) nearly as well as I could from the drawings.[5]

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[1] [Otherwise known as "The Grand Canal, Venice" (R.A., 1837); in the collection of Mr. Ralph Brocklebank; engraved in *Turner and Ruskin*. For other references to the picture, see above, p. 336 *n.*, and below, sec. iii. ch. v. (list) p. 422.]

[2] [*Prometheus Unbound*, ii. 1, 147.]

[3] [One of the drawings for Finden's *Illustrations of the Bible* (1836). It was in the Ruskin collection; see *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, No. 50.]

[4] [The drawing is No. 230 in the National Gallery; *cf.* above, preceding chapter, p. 351.]

[5] [Turner did not exhibit the drawings; they passed with his other works to the nation on his death. Ruskin may have seen the drawings at Turner's house; with the

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curvature from the wind, which the inclination of the sail shows you to be from the west; the excessive sharpness of every edge which is turned to the wind, the faintness of every opposite one, the breaking up of each bar into rounded masses; and finally, the inconceivable variety with which individual form has been given to every member of the multitude, and not only individual form, but roundness and substance even where there is scarcely a hair's-breadth of cloud to express them in. Observe above everything the varying indication of space and depth in the whole, so that you may look through and through from one cloud to another, feeling not merely how they retire to the horizon, but how they melt back into the recesses of the sky; every interval being filled with absolute air, and all its spaces so melting and fluctuating, and fraught with change as with repose, that as you look, you will fancy that the rays shoot higher and higher into the vault of light, and that the pale streak of horizontal vapour is melting away from the cloud that it crosses. Now watch for the next barred sunrise, and take this vignette to the window, and test it by nature's own clouds, among which you will find forms and passages, I do not say merely *like*, but apparently the actual originals of parts of this very drawing. And with whom will you do this, except with Turner? Will you do it with Claude, and set that blank square yard of blue, with its round, white, flat fixtures of similar cloud, beside the purple infinity of nature, with her countless multitudes of shadowy lines, and flaky waves, and folded veils of variable

engravings he had been familiar since childhood, and he had copied them (*Præterita*, i. ch. iv. § 87). The plates are in a sense better to reason from than the drawings. In the case of the *Poems* Turner did, indeed, finish the drawings carefully for the engravers; the drawings for Rogers' *Italy*, on the other hand, were not thus finished, and the skies in many cases were added by the engravers, under Turner's close superintendence. In some MS. notes by the Rev. Alexander Dyce to his copy of Rogers' *Italy*, now in the South Kensington Museum, he says that Rogers told him, "I paid Turner £5 for each of the illustrations to my two volumes, with the stipulation that the drawings should be returned to him after they had been engraved; and the truth is, they were of little value as drawings. The engravers understand Turner perfectly, and make out his slight sketches; besides, they always submit to him the plates, which he touches and retouches, till the most beautiful effect is produced." Rogers' opinion of the little value of the drawings cannot be endorsed; but it is true in the case of the *Italy* vignettes that the drawings alone do not disclose the full intention of Turner.]

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mist? Will you do it with Poussin, and set those massy steps of unyielding solidity, with the chariot and four driving up them, by the side of the delicate forms which terminate in threads too fine for the eye to follow them, and of texture so thin woven that the earliest stars shine through them? Will you do it with Salvator, and set that volume of violent and restless manufactory smoke beside those calm and quiet bars, which pause in the heaven as if they would never leave it more?[1]

§ 12. *His use of the cirrus in expressing mist.*

Now we have just seen how Turner uses the sharp-edged cirri, when he aims at giving great transparency of air. But it was shown in the preceding chapter that sunbeams, or the appearance of them, are always sharper in their edge in proportion as the air is more misty, as they are most defined in a room where there is most dust flying about in it. Consequently, in the vignette we have been just noticing, where transparency is to be given, though there is a blaze of light, its beams are never edged; a tendency to rays is visible, but you cannot in any part find a single marked edge of a rising sunbeam; the sky is merely more flushed in one place than another. Now let us see what Turner does when he wants mist. Turn to the Alps at Daybreak, page 193 in the same book.[2] Here we have the cirri used again, but now they have no sharp edges; they are all fleecy and mingling with each other, though every one of them has the most exquisite indication of individual form, and they melt back, not till they are lost in exceeding light, as in the other plate, but into a mysterious, fluctuating, shadowy sky, of which, though the light penetrates through it all, you perceive every part to be charged with vapour. Notice particularly the half-indicated forms even where it is most serene, behind the snowy mountains. And now, how are the sunbeams drawn? No longer indecisive, flushing, palpitating,

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add :—
"And yet you will say that these men painted nature, and that Turner did not!"]

[2] [Really p. 194; see above, preceding chapter, § 17.]

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every one is sharp and clear, and terminated by definite shadow; note especially the marked lines on the upper clouds; finally, observe the difference in the mode of indicating the figures, which are here misty and undistinguishable, telling only as shadows, though they are near and large, while those in the former vignette came clear upon the eye, though they were so far off as to appear mere points.

§ 13. *His consistency in every minor feature.*

Now is this perpetual consistency in all points, this concentration of every fact which can possibly bear upon what we are to be told, this watchfulness of the entire meaning and system of nature, which fills every part and space of the picture with coincidences of witness, which come out upon us, as they would from the reality, more fully and deeply in proportion to the knowledge we possess and the attention we give, admirable or not? I could go on writing page after page on every sky of Turner's, and pointing out fresh truths in every one. In the Havre, for instance, of the Rivers of France,[1] we have a new fact pointed out to us with respect to these cirri, namely, their being so faint and transparent as not to be distinguishable from the blue of the sky (a frequent case), except in the course of a sunbeam, which, however, does not illumine their edges, they being not solid enough to reflect light, but penetrates their whole substance, and renders them flat luminous forms in its path, instantly and totally lost at its edge. And thus a separate essay would be required by every picture, to make fully understood the new phenomena which it treated and illustrated. But after once showing what are the prevailing characteristics of these clouds, we can only leave it to the reader to trace them wherever they occur. There are some fine and characteristic passages of this kind of cloud given by Stanfield, though he dares not use them in multitude, and is wanting in those refined qualities of form which it is totally impossible to explain in words, but which,

[1] [One of the drawings engraved in *Turner's Annual Tour: Wanderings by the Seine* (1834–35); Plate 3 in *The Seine and the Loire* (1890). It is in the National Gallery, No. 158 ("Twilight outside the Port").]

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perhaps, by simple outlines, on a large scale, selected from the cloud forms of various artists, I may in following portions of the work illustrate with the pencil.

§ 14. *The colour of the upper clouds.*

Of the colours of these clouds I have spoken before (§ 7 of this chapter); but though I then alluded to their purity and vividness, I scarcely took proper notice of their variety; there is indeed in nature variety in all things, and it would be absurd to insist on it in each case, yet the colours of these clouds are so marvellous in their changefulness, that they require particular notice. If you watch for the next sunset when there are a considerable number of these cirri in the sky, you will see, especially at the zenith, that the sky does not remain of the same colour for two inches together. One cloud has a dark side of cold blue, and a fringe of milky white; another, above it, has a dark side of purple and an edge of red; another, nearer the sun, has an under side of orange and an edge of gold: these you will find mingled with, and passing into, the blue of the sky, which in places you will not be able to distinguish from the cool grey of the darker clouds, and which will be itself full of gradation, now pure and deep, now faint and feeble. And all this is done, not in large pieces, nor on a large scale, but over and over again in every square yard, so that there is no single part nor portion of the whole sky which has not in itself variety of colour enough for a separate picture, and yet no single part which is like another, or which has not some peculiar source of beauty, and some peculiar arrangement of colour of its own. Now instead of this you get in the old masters,—Cuyp, or Claude, or whoever they may be,—a field of blue, delicately, beautifully, and uniformly shaded down to the yellow sun, with a certain number of similar clouds, each with a dark side of the same grey, and an edge of the same yellow. I do not say that nature never does anything like this, but I say that her *principle* is to do a great deal more; and that what she does more than this,—what I have above described, and what you may see in nine sunsets out of ten,—has been observed, attempted, and rendered by Turner only,

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and by him with a fidelity and force which present us with more essential truth, and more clear expression and illustration of natural laws, in every wreath of vapour, than composed the whole stock of heavenly information which lasted Cuyp and Claude their lives.

We close then our present consideration of the upper clouds, to return to them when we know what is beautiful: we have at present only to remember that of these clouds, and the truths connected with them, none before Turner had taken any notice whatsoever, that had they therefore been even feebly and imperfectly represented by him, they would yet have given him a claim to be considered more extended and universal in his statement of truths than any of his predecessors. How much more when we find that deep fidelity in his studied and perfect skies which opens new sources of delight to every advancement of our knowledge, and to every added moment of our contemplation!

§ 15. *Recapitulation.*

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CHAPTER III

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS:—SECONDLY, OF THE CENTRAL CLOUD REGION

§ 1. Extent and typical character of the central cloud region.

WE have next to investigate the character of the Central Cloud Region, which I consider as including all clouds which are the usual characteristic of ordinary serene weather, and which touch and envelope the mountains of Switzerland, but never affect those of our own island; they may therefore be considered as occupying a space of air ten thousand feet in height, extending from five to fifteen thousand feet above the sea.

These clouds, according to their elevation, appear with great variety of form, often partaking of the streaked or mottled character of the higher region, and as often, when the precursors of storm, manifesting forms closely connected with the lowest rain-clouds; but the species especially characteristic of the central region is a white, ragged, irregular, and scattered vapour, which has little form and less colour, and of which a good example may be seen in the largest landscape of Cuyp in the Dulwich Gallery.[1] When this vapour collects into masses, it is partially rounded, clumsy, and ponderous, as if it would tumble out of the sky, shaded with a dull grey, and totally devoid of any appearance of energy or motion. Even in nature, these clouds are comparatively uninteresting, scarcely worth raising our heads to look at; and, on canvas, valuable only as a means of introducing light, and breaking the monotony of blue; yet they are, perhaps, beyond all others the favourite clouds of the Dutch masters. Whether they had any motive for the adoption of such materials beyond

[1] [No. 128 (formerly No. 169); *cf.* pp. 272, 350.]

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the extreme facility with which acres of canvas might thus be covered without any troublesome exertion of thought; or any temptation to such selections beyond the impossibility of error where nature shows no form, and the impossibility of deficiency where she shows no beauty, it is not here the place to determine. Such skies are happily beyond the reach of criticism, for he who tells you nothing cannot tell you a falsehood. A little flake-white, touched with a light brush over the carefully toned blue, permitted to fall into whatever forms chance might determine, with the single precaution that their edges should be tolerably irregular, supplied in hundreds of instances a sky quite good enough for all ordinary purposes, quite good enough for cattle to graze, or boors to play at nine-pins under, and equally devoid of all that could gratify, inform, or offend.

§ 2. Its characteristic clouds, requiring no attention nor thought for their representation, are therefore favourite subjects with the old masters.

But although this kind of cloud is, as I have said, typical of the central region, it is not one which nature is fond of. She scarcely ever lets an hour pass without some manifestation of finer forms, sometimes approaching the upper cirri, sometimes the lower cumulus. And then, in the lower outlines we have the nearest approximation which nature ever presents to the clouds of Claude, Salvator, and Poussin, to the characters of which I must request especial attention, as it is here only that we shall have a fair opportunity of comparing their skies with those of the modern school. I shall, as before, glance rapidly at the great laws of specific form, and so put it in the power of the reader to judge for himself of the truth of representation.

§ 3. The clouds of Salvator and Poussin.

Clouds, it is to be remembered, are not so much local vapour, as vapour rendered locally visible by a fall of temperature.[1] Thus a cloud, whose parts are in constant motion, will hover on a snowy mountain, pursuing constantly the same track upon its flanks, and yet

§ 4. Their essential characters.

[1] [For "local vapour, as vapour rendered locally visible by a fall of temperature," eds. 1 and 2 read, "solid bodies borne irregularly before the wind, as they are the wind itself, rendered visible in parts of its progress by a fall of temperature in the moisture

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remaining of the same size, the same form, and in the same place, for half a day together. No matter how violent or how capricious the wind may be, the instant it approaches the spot where the chilly influence of the snow extends, the moisture it carries becomes visible, and then and there the cloud forms on the instant, apparently maintaining its shape against the wind, though the careful and keen eye can see all its parts in the most rapid motion across the mountain. The outlines of such a cloud are of course not determined by the irregular impulses of the wind, but by the fixed lines of radiant heat which regulate the temperature of the atmosphere of the mountain. It is terminated, therefore, not by changing curves, but by steady right lines of more or less decision, often exactly correspondent with the outline of the mountain on which it is formed, and falling therefore into grotesque peaks and precipices. I have seen the marked and angular outline of the Grandes Jorasses, at Chamonix, mimicked in its every jag by a line of clouds above it. Another resultant phenomenon is the formation of cloud in the calm air to leeward of a steep summit; cloud whose edges are in rapid motion, where they are affected by the current of the wind above, and stream from the peak like the smoke of a volcano, yet always vanish at a certain distance from it as steam issuing from a chimney. When wet weather of some duration is approaching, a small white spot of cloud will sometimes appear low on the hill flanks; it will not move, but will increase gradually for some little time, then diminish, still without moving; disappear altogether, reappear ten minutes afterwards, exactly in the same spot: increase to a greater extent than before, again disappear, again return, and at last permanently; other similar spots of cloud forming simultaneously, with various fluctuations, each in its own spot, and at the same level on the hill-side, until all expand, join together, and form an unbroken veil of threatening

it contains." The explanation of the phenomena of drifting mountain clouds here given was adopted by Ruskin from Saussure. It is re-examined and its fallacy shown in *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vii. ch. iii. § 4; and cf. *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, note 10.]

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The Aiguille du Dru.

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grey, which darkens gradually into storm.[1] What in such cases takes place palpably and remarkably, is more or less a law of formation in all clouds whatsoever; they being bounded rather by lines expressive of changes of temperature in the atmosphere, than by the impulses of the currents of wind in which those changes take place. Even when in rapid and visible motion across the sky, the variations which take place in their outlines are not so much alterations of position and arrangement of parts, as they are the alternate formation and disappearance of parts. There is, therefore, usually a parallelism and consistency in their great outlines, which give system to the smaller curves of which they are composed; and if these great lines be taken, rejecting the minutiæ of variation, the resultant form will almost always be angular, and full of character and decision. In the flock-like fields of equal masses, each individual mass has the effect, not of an ellipse or circle, but of a rhomboid; the sky is crossed and chequered, not honeycombed; in the lower cumuli, even though the most rounded of all clouds, the groups are not like balloons or bubbles, but like towers or mountains. And the result of this arrangement in masses more or less angular, varied with, and chiefly constructed of, curves of the utmost freedom and beauty, is that appearance of exhaustless and fantastic energy which gives every cloud a marked character of its own, suggesting resemblances to the specific outlines of organic objects. I do not say that such accidental resemblances are a character to be imitated; but merely that they bear witness to the originality and vigour of separate conception in cloud forms, which give to the scenery of the sky a force and variety no less delightful than that of the changes of mountain outline in a hill district of great elevation; and that there is added to this a spirit-like feeling, a capricious mocking imagery of passion and life, totally different from any effects of inanimate form that the earth can show.

§ 5. Their angular forms and general decision of outline.

[1] [The passage, "Another resultant phenomenon," to "gradually into storm," was first added in ed. 3.]

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The minor contours, out of which the larger outlines are composed, are indeed beautifully curvilinear; but they are never monotonous in their curves. First comes a concave line, then a convex one, then an angular jag breaking off into spray, then a downright straight line, then a curve again, then a deep gap, and a place where all is lost and melted away, and so on; displaying in every inch of the form renewed and ceaseless invention, setting off grace with rigidity, and relieving flexibility with force, in a manner scarcely less admirable, and far more changeful, than even in the muscular forms of the human frame. Nay, such is the exquisite composition of all this, that you may take any single fragment of any cloud in the sky, and you will find it put together as if there had been a year's thought over the plan of it, arranged with the most studied inequality, with the most delicate symmetry, with the most elaborate contrast, a picture in itself. You may try every other piece of cloud in the heaven, and you will find them every one as perfect, and yet not one in the least like another.

§ 6. *The composition of their minor curves.*

Now it may, perhaps, for anything we know, or have yet proved, be highly expedient and proper, in art, that this variety, individuality, and angular character should be changed into a mass of convex curves, each precisely like its neighbour in all respects, and unbroken from beginning to end; it may be highly original, masterly, bold, whatever you choose to call it; but it is *false*.[1] I do not take upon me to assert that the clouds which in ancient Germany were more especially and peculiarly devoted to the business of catching princesses off desert islands, and carrying

§ 7. *Their characters, as given by S. Rosa.*

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read :—
"I do not intend at present to dispute that circular sweeps of the brush, leaving concentric lines distinctly indicative of every separate horse-hair of its constitution, may be highly indicative of masterly handling. I do not dispute that the result may be graceful and sublime in the highest degree, especially when I consider the authority of those vaporescent flourishes, precisely similar in character, with which the more sentimental of the cherubs are adorned and encompassed in models of modern penmanship; nay, I do not take . . ."]

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them to enchanted castles,[1] might not have possessed something of the pillowy organization which we may suppose best adapted for functions of such delicacy and despatch: but I do mean to say that the clouds which God sends upon His earth as the ministers of dew, and rain, and shade, and with which He adorns His heaven, setting them in its vault for the thrones of His spirits, have not, in one instant or atom of their existence, one feature in common with such conceptions and creations. And there are, beyond dispute, more direct and unmitigated falsehoods told, and more laws of nature set at open defiance, in *one* of the "rolling" skies of Salvator, such as that marked 159 in the Dulwich Gallery,[2] than were ever attributed, even by the ignorant and unfeeling, to all the wildest flights of Turner put together.

§ 8. Monotony and falsehood of the clouds of the Italian school generally.

And it is not as if the error were only occasional. It is systematic and constant in all the Italian masters of the seventeenth century,[3] and in most of the Dutch. They looked at clouds, as at everything else which did not particularly help them in their great end of deception, with utter carelessness and bluntness of feeling; saw that there were a great many rounded passages in them; found it much easier to sweep circles than to design beauties, and sat down in their studies, contented with perpetual repetitions of the same spherical conceptions, having about the same relation to the clouds of nature, that a child's carving of a turnip has to the head of the Apollo. Look at the round things about the sun in the bricky Claude, the smallest of the three Sea-ports in the National Gallery.[4] They are a great deal more like half-crowns than clouds. Take the ropy tough-looking wreath

[1] [Perhaps a reference to Grimm's *German Popular Stories*; see *e.g.* those entitled "The Lady and the Lion" and "The Salad"—the former, a story of an enchanted castle, the latter, of the cloud ministry in question.]

[2] [Now No. 137, "A Pool with Friars Fishing," mentioned by Waagen (*Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, ii. 347). For other references to the picture, see pp. 406, 477.]

[3] [The words "of the seventeenth century" were added in ed. 3.]

[4] [No. 5, "A Seaport at Sunset"; for another reference, see above, p. 274.]

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in the Sacrifice of Isaac,[1] and find one part of it, if you can, which is not the repetition of every other part of it, all together being as round and vapid as the brush could draw them; or take the two cauliflower-like protuberances in No. 220 of the Dulwich Gallery,[2] and admire the studied similarity between them; you cannot tell which is which; or take the so-called Nicolas Poussin, No. 212 Dulwich Gallery,[3] in which, from the brown trees to the right-hand side of the picture, there is not one line which is not physically impossible.

§ 9. Vast size of congregated masses of cloud.

But it is not the outline only which is thus systematically false. The drawing of the solid form is worse still, for it is to be remembered that although clouds of course arrange themselves more or less into broad masses, with a light side and dark side, both their light and shade are invariably composed of a series of divided masses, each of which has in its outline as much variety and character as the great outline of the cloud; presenting therefore, a thousand times repeated, all that I have described as characteristic of the general form. Nor are these multitudinous divisions a truth of slight importance in the character of sky, for they are dependent on, and illustrative of, a quality which is usually in a great degree overlooked,—the enormous retiring spaces of solid clouds. Between the illumined edge of a heaped cloud, and that part of its body which turns into shadow, there will generally be a clear distance of several miles, more or less, of course, according to the general size of the cloud; but, in such large masses as in Poussin and others of the old masters occupy the fourth or fifth of the visible sky, the clear illumined breadth of vapour, from the edge to the shadow, involves at least a distance of five or six miles. We are little apt, in watching the changes of a mountainous range

[1] [By Gaspard Poussin, No. 31 in the National Gallery; see above, pp. 282, 332, 348. For Ruskin's defence of his phrase, "ropy tough-looking wreath," against a critic's objection, see below, Appendix ii. p. 644.]

[2] ["Mountainous Landscape with a River," now attributed to the school of Salvator Rosa; no longer exhibited in the Gallery. For other references, see below, p. 387.]

[3] [Now No. 30, "A Castle in a Wood," by Gaspar, not Nicholas, Poussin.]

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of cloud, to reflect that the masses of vapour which compose it are huger and higher than any mountain range of the earth; and the distances between mass and mass are not yards of air traversed in an instant by the flying form, but valleys of changing atmosphere leagues over; that the slow motion of ascending curves, which we can scarcely trace, is a boiling energy of exulting vapour, rushing into the heaven a thousand feet in a minute; and that the toppling angle, whose sharp edge almost escapes notice in the multitudinous forms around it, is a nodding precipice of storms 3000 feet from base to summit. It is not until we have actually compared the forms of the sky with the hill ranges of the earth, and seen the soaring Alp overtopped and buried in one surge of the sky, that we begin to conceive or appreciate the colossal scale of the phenomena of the latter. But of this there can be no doubt in the mind of any one accustomed to trace the forms of clouds among hill ranges, as it is there a demonstrable and evident fact, that the space of vapour visibly extended over an ordinarily clouded sky is not less, from the point nearest to the observer to the horizon, than twenty leagues; that the size of every mass of separate form, if it be at all largely divided, is to be expressed in terms of *miles;* and that every boiling heap of illuminated mist in the nearer sky is an enormous mountain, fifteen or twenty thousand feet in height, six or seven miles over in illuminated surface, furrowed by a thousand colossal ravines, torn by local tempests into peaks and promontories, and changing its features with the majestic velocity of the volcano.

§ 10. *Demonstrable by comparison with mountain ranges.*

To those who have once convinced themselves of these proportions of the heaven, it will be immediately evident, that though we might, without much violation of truth, omit the minor divisions of a cloud four yards over, it is the veriest audacity of falsehood to omit those of masses where for yards we have to read miles; first, because it is physically impossible that such a space should be without many and vast divisions;

§ 11. *And consequent divisions and varieties of feature,*

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secondly, because divisions at such distances must be sharply and forcibly marked by aërial perspective, so that not only they must be there, but they must be visible and evident to the eye; and thirdly, because these multitudinous divisions are absolutely necessary, in order to express this space and distance, which cannot but be feebly and imperfectly felt, even with every aid and evidence that art can give of it.

§ 12. *Not lightly to be omitted.*

Now if an artist, taking for his subject a chain of vast mountains several leagues long, were to unite all their varieties of ravine, crag, chasm, and precipice, into one solid unbroken mass, with one light side and one dark side, looking like a white ball or parallelopiped two yards broad, the words "breadth," "boldness," "generalization," would scarcely be received as a sufficient apology for a proceeding so glaringly false, and so painfully degrading. But when, instead of the really large and simple forms of mountains, united, as they commonly are, by some great principle of common organization, and so closely resembling each other as often to correspond in line and join in effect; when, instead of this, we have to do with spaces of cloud twice as vast, broken up into a multiplicity of forms necessary to, and characteristic of, their very nature, those forms subject to a thousand local changes, having no association with each other, and rendered visible in a thousand places by their own transparency or cavities, where the mountain forms would be lost in shade; that this far greater space, and this far more complicated arrangement, should be all summed up into one round mass, with one swell of white, and one flat side of unbroken grey, is considered an evidence of the sublimest powers in the artist of generalization and breadth. Now it may be broad, it may be grand, it may be beautiful, artistical, and in every way desirable. I don't say it is not: I merely say it is a concentration of every kind of falsehood; it is depriving heaven of its space, clouds of their buoyancy, winds of their motion, and distance of its blue.

This is done, more or less, by all the old masters, without

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an exception.* Their idea of clouds was altogether similar; more or less perfectly carried out, according to their power of hand and accuracy of eye, but universally the same in conception. It was the idea of a comparatively small, round, puffed-up white body, irregularly associated with other round and puffed-up white bodies, each with a white light side, and a grey dark side, and a soft reflected light, floating a great way below a blue dome. Such is the idea of a cloud formed by most people; it is the first, general, uncultivated notion of what we see every day. People think of the clouds as about as large as they look; forty yards over, perhaps; they see generally that they are solid bodies subject to the same laws as other solid bodies, roundish, whitish, and apparently suspended a great way under a high blue concavity. So that these ideas be tolerably given with smooth paint, they are content, and call it nature. How different it is from anything that nature ever did, or ever will do, I have endeavoured to show; but I cannot, and do not, expect the contrast to be fully felt, unless the reader will actually go out on days when, either before or after rain, the clouds arrange themselves into vigorous masses, and, after arriving at something like a conception of their distance and size, from the mode in which they retire over the horizon, will, for himself, trace and watch their varieties of form and outline, as mass rises over mass in their illuminated bodies. Let him climb from step to step over their craggy and broken slopes, let him plunge into the long vistas of immeasurable perspective, that guide back to the blue sky; and when he finds his imagination lost in their immensity, and his senses confused with their multitude, let him go to Claude, to Salvator,[1] or to Poussin, and ask them for a like space, or like infinity.

§ 13. *Imperfect conception of this size and extent in ancient landscape.*

* Here I include even the great ones, even Titian and Veronese.[2]

[1] [For "to Salvator," eds. 1 and 2 read, "to Berghem, to Cuyp."]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 do not contain this footnote; eds. 3 and 4 add, "excepting only Tintoret and the religious schools."]

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But perhaps the most grievous fault of all, in the clouds of these painters, is the utter want of transparency. Not in her most ponderous and lightless masses will nature ever leave us without some evidence of transmitted sunshine; and she perpetually gives us passages in which the vapour becomes visible only by the sunshine which it arrests and holds within itself, not caught on its surface, but entangled in its mass,—floating fleeces, precious with the gold of heaven; and this translucency is especially indicated on the dark sides even of her heaviest wreaths, which possess opalescent and delicate hues of partial illumination, far more dependent upon the beams which pass through them than on those which are reflected upon them. Nothing, on the contrary, can be more painfully and ponderously opaque than the clouds of the old masters universally. However far removed in aërial distance, and however brilliant in light, they never appear filmy or evanescent, and their light is always *on* them, not *in* them. And this effect is much increased by the positive and persevering determination on the part of their outlines not to be broken in upon, nor interfered with in the slightest degree, by any presumptuous blue, or impertinent winds.[1] There is no inequality, no variation, no losing or disguising of line, no melting into nothingness, no shattering into spray; edge succeeds edge with imperturbable equanimity, and nothing short of the most decided interference on the part of tree tops, or the edge of the picture, prevents us from being able to follow them all the way round, like the coast of an island.

§ 14. *Total want of transparency and evanescence in the clouds of ancient landscape.*

And be it remembered that all these faults and deficiencies are to be found in their drawing merely of the separate masses of the solid cumulus, the easiest drawn of all clouds.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read—
"impertinent winds. Stulz could not be more averse to the idea of being ragged. There is no . . ."
Stulz was the tailor of the time. Ruskin in a reply to his father, who had asked for details of his first appearance on the lecture-platform (Edinburgh, 1st December 1853), says, "Coat by Stulz."]

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But nature scarcely ever confines herself to such masses; they form but the thousandth part of her variety of effect. She builds up a pyramid of their boiling volumes, bars this across like a mountain with the grey cirrus, envelopes it in black, ragged, drifting vapour, covers the open part of the sky with mottled horizontal fields, breaks through these with sudden and long sunbeams, tears up their edges with local winds, scatters over the gaps of blue the infinity of multitude of the high cirri, and melts even the unoccupied azure into palpitating shades. And all this is done over and over again in every quarter of a mile. Where Poussin or Claude has three similar masses, nature has fifty pictures, made up each of millions of minor thoughts; fifty aisles, penetrating through angelic chapels to the Shechinah of the blue;[1] fifty hollow ways among bewildered hills, each with its own nodding rocks, and cloven precipices, and radiant summits, and robing vapours, but all unlike each other, except in beauty, all bearing witness to the unwearied, exhaustless operation of the Infinite Mind. Now, in cases like these especially, as we observed before of general nature, though it is altogether hopeless to follow out in the space of any one picture this incalculable and inconceivable glory, yet the painter can at least see that the space he has at his command, narrow and confined as it is, is made complete use of, and that no part of it shall be without entertainment and food for thought. If he could subdivide it by millionths of inches, he could not reach the multitudinous majesty of nature; but it is at least incumbent upon him to make the most of what he has, and not, by exaggerating the proportions, banishing the variety, and repeating the forms of his clouds, to set at defiance the eternal principles of the heavens—fitfulness and infinity. And now let us, keeping in

§ 15. *Further proof of their deficiency in space.*

[1] [Shekinah, or Shechinah, a term applied by the Jews to that visible symbol (whether material or immaterial) of the divine glory which dwelt in the tabernacle and temple. The word, though nowhere met with in this form in the Bible, is a direct derivation from the Hebrew root *shachan*, to dwell; it denoted a concentrated glowing brightness, a preternatural splendour, an effulgent something which was expressed by the term "glory."]

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memory what we have seen of Poussin and Salvator, take up one of Turner's skies, and see whether *he* is as narrow in his conception, or as niggardly in his space. It does not matter which we take; his sublime Babylon * is a fair example for our present purpose. Ten miles away, down the Euphrates, where it gleams last along the plain, he gives us a drift of dark elongated vapour, melting beneath into a dim haze which embraces the hills on the horizon. It is exhausted with its own motion, and broken up by the wind in its own mass into numberless groups of billowy and tossing fragments, which, beaten by the weight of storm down to the earth, are just lifting themselves again on wearied wings, and perishing in the effort. Above these, and far beyond them, the eye goes back to a broad sea of white illuminated mist, or rather cloud melted into rain, and absorbed again before that rain has fallen, but penetrated throughout, whether it be vapour or whether it be dew, with soft sunshine, turning it as white as snow. Gradually, as it rises, the rainy fusion ceases. You cannot tell where the film of blue on the left begins, but it is deepening, deepening still; and the cloud, with its edge first invisible, then all but imaginary, then just felt when the eye is *not* fixed on it, and lost when it is, at last rises, keen from excessive distance, but soft and mantling in its body as a swan's bosom fretted by faint wind; heaving fitfully against the delicate deep blue, with white waves, whose forms are traced by the pale lines of opalescent shadow, shade only because the light is within it, and not upon it, and which break with their own swiftness into a driven line of level spray, winnowed into threads by the wind, and flung before the following vapour like those swift shafts of arrowy water which a great cataract shoots into the air beside it, trying to find the earth. Beyond these, again, rises a colossal mountain of grey cumulus, through whose shadowed sides the sunbeams penetrate in dim, sloping, rain-like shafts; and over which

§ 16. *Instance of perfect truth in the sky of Turner's Babylon.*

* Engraved in Finden's Bible Illustrations.

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they fall in a broad burst of streaming light, sinking to the earth, and showing through their own visible radiance the three successive ranges of hills which connect its desolate plain with space. Above, the edgy summit of the cumulus, broken into fragments, recedes into the sky, which is peopled in its serenity with quiet multitudes of the white, soft, silent cirrus; and, under these, again, drift near the zenith disturbed and impatient shadows of a darker spirit, seeking rest and finding none.

§ 17. *And in his Pools of Solomon.*

Now this is nature! It is the exhaustless living energy with which the universe is filled; and what will you set beside it of the works of other men? Show me a single picture, in the whole compass of ancient art, in which I can pass from cloud to cloud, from region to region, from first to second and third heaven, as I can here, and you may talk of Turner's want of truth. Turn to the Pools of Solomon,[1] and walk through the passages of mist as they melt on the one hand into those stormy fragments of fiery cloud, or on the other into the cold solitary shadows that compass the sweeping hill; and when you find an inch without air and transparency, and a hair's breadth without changefulness and thought; and when you can count the torn waves of tossing radiance that gush from the sun, as you can count the fixed, white, insipidities of Claude; or when you can measure the modulation and the depth of that hollow mist, as you can the flourishes of the brush upon the canvas of Salvator, talk of Turner's want of truth!

But let us take up simpler and less elaborate works, for there is too much in these to admit of being analyzed.

In the vignette of the Lake of Como, in Rogers's Italy,[2] the space is so small that the details have been partially lost by the engraver; but enough remain to illustrate the great principles

[1] [Also one of the drawings for Finden's *Illustrations of the Bible.* For an anecdote about the drawing, see Rev. W. Kingsley's Notes added to Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner.*]

[2] [The drawing is No. 215 in the National Gallery.]

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of cloud form, which we have endeavoured to explain. Observe first the general angular outline of the volumes on the left of the sun. If you mark the points where the direction of their outline changes, and connect those points by right lines, the cloud will touch, but will not cut, those lines throughout. Yet its contour is as graceful as it is full of character, toppling, ready to change, fragile as enormous, evanescent as colossal. Observe how, where it crosses the line of the sun, it becomes luminous, illustrating what has been observed of the visibility of mist in sunlight. Observe, above all, the multiplicity of its solid form, the depth of its shadows in perpetual transition; it is not round and swelled, half light and half dark, but full of breaking irregular shadow and transparency, variable as the wind, and melting imperceptibly above into the haziness of the sun-lighted atmosphere, contrasted in all its vast forms with the delicacy and the multitude of the brightly touched cirri. Nothing can surpass the truth of this; the cloud is as gigantic in its simplicity as the Alp which it opposes; but how various, how transparent, how infinite in its organization!

§ 18. *Truths of outline and character in his Como.*

I would draw especial attention, both here and in all other works of Turner, to the beautiful use of the low horizontal bars or fields of cloud (cirrostratus), which associate themselves so frequently, more especially before storms, with the true cumulus, floating on its flanks, or capping it, as if it were a mountain, and seldom mingling with its substance, unless in the very formation of rain. They supply us with one of those beautiful instances of natural composition, by which the artist is superseded and excelled; for, by the occurrence of these horizontal flakes, the rolling form of the cumulus is both opposed in its principal lines, and gifted with an apparent solidity and vastness which no other expedient could have exhibited, and which far exceed in awfulness the impression of the noblest mountains of the earth. I have seen in the evening light of Italy, the Alps themselves out-towered by ranges of these mighty

§ 19. *Association of the cirrostratus with the cumulus.*

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clouds, alternately white in the starlight, and inhabited by fire.[1]

Turn back to the first vignette in the Italy.[2] The angular outlines and variety of modulation in the clouds above the sail, and the delicate atmosphere of morning into which they are dissolved about the breathing hills, require no comment; but one part of this vignette demands especial notice; it is the repetition of the outline of the snowy mountain by the light cloud above it. The cause of this I have already explained (*vide* page 372), and its occurrence here is especially valuable as bearing witness to the thorough and scientific knowledge thrown by Turner into his slightest works. The thing cannot be seen once in six months; it would not have been noticed, much less introduced, by an ordinary artist, and to the public it is a dead letter, or an offence. Ninety-nine persons in a hundred would not have observed this pale wreath of parallel cloud above the hill, and the hundredth in all probability says it is unnatural. It requires the most intimate and accurate knowledge of the Alps before such a piece of refined truth can be understood.

§ 20. *The deep-based knowledge of the Alps in Turner's Lake of Geneva.*

At the 216th page[3] we have another and a new case, in

[1] [The whole of this § ("I would draw . . . inhabited by fire") was entirely different in ed. 1 (only), where it ran thus:—

"It is instructive to compare with this such a sky as that of Backhuysen, No. 75, Dulwich Gallery, where we have perfectly spherical clusters of grape-like, smooth, opaque bodies, which are evidently the results of the artist's imaginative powers, strained to their highest pitch in his study, perhaps, however, modified and rendered more classical and ideal by his feeling of the beautiful in the human form, at least in that part of it which is in Dutchmen most peculiarly developed. There are few pictures which are so evidently indoor work as this, so completely in every part bearing witness to the habit of the artist of shutting his eyes and soul to every impression from without, and repeating for ever and ever without a sensation of imperfection, a hope or desire of improvement, or a single thought of truth or nature, the same childish, contemptible, and impossible conception. It is a valuable piece of work, as teaching us the abasement into which the human mind may fall when it trusts to its own strength, and delights in its own imaginations."

§ 19. *Compared with the clouds of Backhuysen.*

The subject of the picture is "Boats in a Storm, now No. 327."]

[2] [The drawing for the vignette in Rogers' *Italy*—"The Lake of Geneva"—is No. 210 in the National Gallery. The sky was a good deal elaborated in the engraving.]

[3] [Of Rogers' *Italy*. The drawing—"Amalfi"—is No. 225 in the National Gallery. The sky-effects were added in the engraving.]

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which clouds in perfect repose, unaffected by wind, or any influence but that of their own elastic force, boil, rise, and melt in the heaven with more approach to globular form than under any other circumstances is possible.[1] I name this vignette, not only because it is most remarkable for the buoyancy and elasticity of inward energy indicated through the most ponderous forms, and affords us a beautiful instance of the junction of the cirro-stratus with the cumulus of which we have just been speaking (§ 19), but because it is a characteristic example of Turner's use of one of the facts of nature not hitherto noticed, that the edge of a partially transparent body is often darker than its central surface, because at the edge the light penetrates and passes through, which from the centre is reflected to the eye. The sharp cutting edge of a wave, if not broken into foam, frequently appears for an instant almost black; and the outlines of these massy clouds, where their projecting forms rise in relief against the light of their bodies, are almost always marked, clearly and firmly, by very dark edges. Hence we have frequently, if not constantly, multitudinous forms indicated only by outline, giving character and solidity to the great masses of light without taking away from their breadth. And Turner avails himself of these boldly and constantly, outlining forms with the brush of which no other indication is given. All the grace and solidity of the white cloud on the right-hand side of the vignette before us depends upon such outlines.

§ 21. *Farther principles of cloud form exemplified in his Amalfi.*

As I before observed of mere execution, that one of the best tests of its excellence was the expression of *infinity;*[2] so it may be noticed with respect to the painting of details generally, that more difference lies between one artist and another,

[1] [Ed. 1 (only) reads here as follows:—

"But even here the great outline of the mass is terminated by severe right lines, four sides of an irregular hexagon, and the lesser cloud is peaked like a cliff. But I name this vignette not only because . . . aetherial elasticity of inward energy indicated in spite of the most ponderous forms, and because it is as faithful as it is bold in the junction of those weighty masses with the delicate, horizontal lines of the lower air, but because it is a characteristic example," etc.]

[2] [Above, pp. 123 (§ 4), 339; and *cf.* sec. i. ch. v. in next volume.]

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in the attainment of this quality, than in any other of the efforts of art; and that if we wish, without reference to beauty of composition, or any other interfering circumstances, to form a judgment of the truth of painting, perhaps the very first thing we should look for, whether in one thing or another, —foliage, or clouds, or waves,—should be the expression of *infinity* always and everywhere, in all parts and divisions of parts. For we may be quite sure that what is not infinite cannot be true. It does not, indeed, follow that what is infinite is always true, but it cannot be altogether false; for this simple reason, that it is impossible for mortal mind to compose an infinity of any kind for itself, or to form an idea of perpetual variation, and to avoid all repetition, merely by its own combining resources. The moment that we trust to ourselves, we repeat ourselves, and therefore the moment we see in a work of any kind whatsoever the expression of infinity, we may be certain that the workman has gone to nature for it; while, on the other hand, the moment we see repetition, or want of infinity, we may be certain that the workman has *not* gone to nature for it.

§ 22. *Reasons for insisting on the infinity of Turner's works. Infinity is almost an unerring test of all truth.*

For instance, in the picture of Salvator before noticed, No. 220 in the Dulwich Gallery,[1] as we see at once that the two masses of cloud absolutely repeat each other in every one of their forms, and that each is composed of about twelve white sweeps of the brush, all forming the same curve, and all of the same length; and as we can count these, and measure their common diameter, and, by stating the same to anybody else, convey to him a full and perfect idea and knowledge of that sky in all its parts and proportions,—as we can do this, we may be absolutely certain, without reference to the real sky, or to any other part of nature, without even knowing what the white things were intended for, that they cannot possibly resemble *anything;* that whatever they were meant for, they

§ 23. *Instances of the total want of it in the works of Salvator;*

[1] [See above, p. 376 n. 2, and below, pp. 454, 476.]

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can be nothing but a violent contradiction of all nature's principles and forms. When, on the other hand, we take up such a sky as that of Turner's Rouen seen from St. Catherine's Hill, in the Rivers of France,[1] and find, in the first place, that he has given us a distance over the hills in the horizon, into which when we are tired of penetrating, we must turn and come back again, there being not the remotest chance of getting to the end of it; and when we see that from this measureless distance up to the zenith, the whole sky is one ocean of alternate waves of cloud and light, so blended together that the eye cannot rest on any one without being guided to the next, and so to a hundred more, till it is lost over and over again in every wreath; that if it divides the sky into quarters of inches, and tries to count or comprehend the component parts of any single one of those divisions, it is still as utterly defied and defeated by the part as by the whole; that there is not one line out of the millions there which repeats another, not one which is unconnected with another, not one which does not in itself convey histories of distance and space, and suggest new and changeful form; then we may be all but certain, though these forms are too mysterious and too delicate for us to analyze, though all is so crowded and so connected that it is impossible to test any single part by particular laws, yet without any such tests we may be sure that this infinity can only be based on truth, that it *must* be nature, because man could not have originated it, and that every form must be faithful, because none is like another. And therefore it is that I insist so constantly on this great quality of landscape painting, as it appears in Turner: because it is not merely a constant and most important truth in itself, but it almost amounts to a demonstration of every other truth. And it will be found a far rarer

§ 24. And of the universal presence of it in those of Turner. The conclusions which may be arrived at from it.

[1] [Formerly in the Ruskin collection; see *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, No. 50. The drawing is now in the collection of Mr. Henry Yates Thompson; it is engraved in *Ruskin and Turner*. Turner's first sketch from nature for the drawing is No. 566 in the National Gallery.]

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attainment in the works of other men than is commonly supposed, and the sign, wherever it is really found, of the very highest art. For we are apt to forget that the greatest *number* is no nearer infinity than the least, if it be definite number; and the vastest bulk is no nearer infinity than the most minute, if it be definite bulk; so that a man may multiply his objects for ever and ever, and be no nearer infinity than he had reached with one, if he do not vary them and confuse them; and a man may reach infinity in every touch and line, and part, and unit, if in these he be truthfully various and obscure. And we shall find, the more we examine the works of the old masters, that always, and in all parts, they are totally wanting in every feeling of infinity, and therefore in *all* truth: and even in the works of the moderns, though the aim is far more just, we shall frequently perceive an erroneous choice of means, and a substitution of mere number or bulk for real infinity.[1]

§ 25. The multiplication of objects, or increase of their size, will not give the impression of infinity, but is the resource of novices.

And, therefore, in concluding our notice of the central cloud region, I should wish to dwell particularly on those skies of Turner's in which we have the whole space of the heaven covered with the delicate dim flakes of gathering vapour, which are the intermediate link between the central region and that of the rain-cloud, and which assemble and grow out of the air; shutting up the heaven with a grey interwoven veil, before the approach of storm, faint but universal, letting the light of the upper sky pass pallidly through their body, but never rending a passage for the ray. We have the first approach and gathering of this kind of sky most gloriously given in the vignette at p. 115 of Rogers's Italy,[2] which is one of the most

§ 26. Farther instances of infinity in the grey skies of Turner.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read :—
"real infinity, ending, as in the works of one of our artists most celebrated for *sublimity* of conception (the general admiration of whose works, however ill-founded, I can perfectly understand, for I once admired them myself,) in morbid and meaningless tautology."
The reference is perhaps to Martin; see above, pp. 36, 38.]

[2] ["Galileo's Villa"; the drawing is No. 221 in the National Gallery.]

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perfect pieces of feeling (if I may transgress my usual rules for an instant) extant in art, owing to the extreme grandeur and stern simplicity of the strange and ominous forms of level cloud behind the building. In that at p. 228 there are passages of the same kind, of exceeding perfection. The sky through which the dawn is breaking in the Voyage of Columbus, and that with the moonlight under the Rialto in Rogers's Poems, the skies of the Bethlehem and the Pyramids in Finden's Bible series, and among the Academy pictures those of the Hero and Leander and the Flight into Egypt, are characteristic and noble examples, as far as any individual works can be characteristic of the universality of this mighty mind. I ought not to forget the magnificent solemnity and fulness of the wreaths of gathering darkness in the Folkestone.[1]

§ 27. The excellence of the cloud-drawing of Stanfield.

We must not pass from the consideration of the central cloud region, without noticing the general high quality of the cloud-drawing of Stanfield. He is limited in his range, and is apt in extensive compositions to repeat himself, neither is he ever very refined; but his cloud form is firmly and fearlessly chiselled, with perfect knowledge, though usually with some want of feeling. As far as it goes, it is very grand and very tasteful, beautifully developed in the space of its solid parts and full of action. Next to Turner, he is incomparably the noblest master of cloud-form of all our artists; in fact, he is the only one among them who really can *draw* a cloud. For it is a very different thing to rub out an irregular white space neatly with the handkerchief, or to leave a bright little bit of paper in the middle of a wash, and to give the real anatomy of

[1] [The vignette at p. 223 of the *Italy* is "Padua: Moonlight"; the drawing is No. 223 in the National Gallery. The dawn in the "Voyage of Columbus" (p. 261 of the *Poems*) is No. 249 in the National Gallery. The "Rialto" (p. 95 of the *Poems*) is No. 394 (see, for another reference to it, *Catalogue of the Drawings and Sketches by Turner in the National Gallery* (Group xiii.). For "Hero and Leander," see above, p. 242 *n*. The "Flight into Egypt" (otherwise called "Dawn of Christianity") was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1841, and was formerly in the Windus collection. The Folkestone drawing was first published in Cooke's *Southern Coast*, No. 15 (1826); it is Plate 8 in M. B. Huish's ed. of 1892.]

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cloud-form with perfect articulation of chiaroscuro. We have multitudes of painters who can throw a light bit of straggling vapour across their sky, or leave in it delicate and tender passages of breaking light; but this is a very different thing from taking up each of those bits or passages, and giving it structure, and parts, and solidity. The eye is satisfied with exceedingly little, as an indication of cloud, and a few clever sweeps with the brush on wet paper may give all that it requires; but this is not *drawing* clouds; nor will it ever appeal fully and deeply to the mind, except when it occurs only as a part of a higher system. And there is not one of our modern artists, except Stanfield, who can do much more than this. As soon as they attempt to lay detail upon their clouds, they appear to get bewildered, forget that they are dealing with forms regulated by precisely the same simple laws of light and shade as more substantial matter, overcharge their colour, confuse their shadows and dark sides, and end in mere ragged confusion. I believe the evil arises from their never attempting to render clouds except with the brush; other objects, at some period of study, they take up with the chalk or lead, and so learn something of their form; but they appear to consider clouds as altogether dependent on cobalt and camel's hair, and so never understand anything of their real anatomy. But, whatever the cause, I cannot point to any central clouds of the moderns,* except those of Turner and Stanfield, as really showing much knowledge of, or feeling for, nature, though *all* are superior to the conventional and narrow conceptions of the

§ 23. *The average standing of the English school.*

* I had forgotten, or little observed, when I wrote this, the elaborate cumuli in many of Linnell's best pictures; and I think that among our rising artists there may now (1851) be traced signs of rapidly increasing care in studies of skies. There was a very beautiful group of cirri in a picture by a Mr. Dawson, in the British Institution of this year, a study on the River Trent at sunset.[1]

[1] [The footnote was, as its date (1851) implies, added in ed. 5. To John Linnell (1792–1882) Ruskin pays a further tribute below, p. 604 *n.*, and in *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. Addenda. Henry Dawson (1811–1878) was a Nottingham artist, originally employed in a lace factory there.]

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ancients. We are all right as far as we go; our work may be incomplete, but it is not false; and it is far better, far less injurious to the mind, that we should be little attracted to the sky, and taught to be satisfied with a light suggestion of truthful form, than that we should be drawn to it by violently pronounced outline and intense colour, to find in its finished falsehood everything to displease or to mislead, to hurt our feelings if we have foundation for them, and corrupt them if we have none.

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CHAPTER IV

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS:—THIRDLY, OF THE REGION OF THE RAIN-CLOUD

THE clouds which I wish to consider as characteristic of the lower, or rainy region, differ not so much in their real nature from those of the central and uppermost regions, as in appearance, owing to their greater nearness. For the central clouds, and perhaps even the high cirri, deposit moisture, if not distinctly rain, as is sufficiently proved by the existence of snow on the highest peaks of the Himalaya; and when, on any such mountains, we are brought into close contact with the central clouds,* we find them little differing from the ordinary rain-cloud of the plains, except by being slightly less dense and dark. But the apparent differences, dependent on proximity, are most marked and important.

§ 1. *The apparent difference in character between the lower and central clouds is dependent chiefly on proximity.*

In the first place, the clouds of the central region have, as has been before observed, pure and aërial greys for their dark sides, owing to their necessary distance from the observer; and as this distance permits a multitude of local phenomena capable of influencing colour, such as accidental sunbeams, refractions, transparencies, or local mists and showers, to be collected into a space apparently small, the colours of these clouds are always changeful and palpitating; and whatever degree of grey or of gloom

§ 2. *Their marked differences in colour.*

* I am unable to say to what height the real rain-cloud may extend; perhaps there are no mountains which rise altogether above storm. I have never been in a violent storm at a greater height than between 8000 and 9000 feet above the level of the sea. There the rain-cloud is exceedingly light, compared with the ponderous darkness of the lower air.

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may be mixed with them is invariably pure and aërial. But the nearness of the rain-cloud rendering it impossible for a number of phenomena to be at once visible, makes its hue of grey monotonous, and (by losing the blue of distance) warm and brown compared with that of the upper clouds. This is especially remarkable on any part of it which may happen to be illumined, such part being of a brown, bricky, ochreous tone, never bright, always coming in dark outline on the lights of the central clouds. But it is seldom that this takes place, and when it does, never over large spaces, little being usually seen of the rain-cloud but its under and dark side. This, when the cloud above is dense, becomes of an inky and cold grey, and sulphurous and lurid if there be thunder in the air.

§ 3. And indefiniteness of form.

With these striking differences in colour, it presents no fewer nor less important in form, chiefly from losing almost all definiteness of character and outline. It is sometimes nothing more than a thin mist, whose outline cannot be traced, rendering the landscape locally indistinct or dark; if its outline be visible, it is ragged and torn, rather a spray of cloud, taken off its edge and sifted by the wind, than an edge of the cloud itself. In fact, it rather partakes of the nature, and assumes the appearance, of real water in the state of spray, than of elastic vapour. This appearance is enhanced by the usual presence of formed rain, carried along with it in a columnar form, ordinarily of course reaching the ground like a veil, but very often suspended with the cloud, and hanging from it like a jagged fringe, or over it, in light, rain being always lighter than the cloud it falls from. These columns or fringes of rain are often waved and bent by the wind, or twisted, sometimes even swept upwards from the clouds. The velocity of these vapours, though not necessarily in reality greater than that of the central clouds, appears greater, owing to their proximity, and, of course, also to the usual presence of a more violent wind. They are also apparently much more in the power of the wind, having less elastic force in themselves; but they are precisely subject to the same great laws of form which

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regulate the upper clouds. They are not solid bodies borne about with the wind, but they carry the wind with them, and cause it. Every one knows, who has ever been out in a storm, that the time when it rains heaviest is precisely the time when he cannot hold up his umbrella; that the wind is carried with the cloud, and lulls when it has passed. Every one who has ever seen rain in a hill country knows that a rain-cloud, like any other, may have all its parts in rapid motion, and yet, as a whole, remain in one spot. I remember once, when in crossing the Tête Noire, I had turned up the valley towards Trient, I noticed a rain-cloud forming on the Glacier de Trient. With a west wind, it proceeded towards the Col de Balme, being followed by a prolonged wreath of vapour, always forming exactly at the same spot over the glacier. This long, serpent-like line of cloud went on at a great rate till it reached the valley leading down from the Col de Balme, under the slate rocks of the Croix de Fer. There it turned sharp round, and came down this valley, at right angles to its former progress, and finally directly contrary to it, till it came down within five hundred feet of the village, where it disappeared; the line behind always advancing, and always disappearing, at the same spot. This continued for half an hour, the long line describing the curve of a horse-shoe; always coming into existence and always vanishing at exactly the same places; traversing the space between with enormous swiftness. This cloud, ten miles off, would have looked like a perfectly motionless wreath, in the form of a horse-shoe, hanging over the hills.

§ 4. They are subject to precisely the same great laws.

To the region of the rain-cloud belong also all the phenomena of drifted smoke, heat-haze, local mists in the morning or evening, in valleys or over water, mirage, white steaming vapour rising in evaporation from moist and open surfaces, and everything which visibly affects the condition of the atmosphere without actually assuming the form of cloud. These phenomena are as perpetual in all countries as they are beautiful, and afford by

§ 5. Value, to the painter, of the rain-cloud.

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far the most effective and valuable means which the painter possesses, for modification of the forms of fixed objects. The upper clouds are distinct and comparatively opaque, they do not modify, but conceal; but, through the rain-cloud and its accessory phenomena, all that is beautiful may be made manifest, and all that is hurtful concealed; what is paltry may be made to look vast, and what is ponderous, aërial; mystery may be obtained without obscurity, and decoration without disguise. And, accordingly, nature herself uses it constantly, as one of her chief means of most perfect effect; not in one country, nor another, but wherever there is anything worth calling landscape. I cannot answer for the desert of the Sahara, but I know that there cannot be a greater mistake than supposing that delicate and variable effects of mist and rain-cloud are peculiar to northern climates. I have never seen, in any place or country, effects of mists more perfect than in the Campagna of Rome, and among the hills of Sorrento. It is therefore matter of no little marvel to me, and I conceive that it can scarcely be otherwise to any reflecting person, that throughout the whole range of ancient landscape art there occurs no instance of the painting of a real rain-cloud, still less of any of the more delicate phenomena characteristic of the region. "Storms" indeed, as the innocent public persist in calling such abuses of nature and abortions of art as the two windy Gaspars in our National Gallery,[1] are common enough; massive concretions of ink and indigo, wrung and twisted very hard, apparently in a vain effort to get some moisture out of them; bearing up courageously and successfully against a wind whose effects on the trees in the foreground can be accounted for only on the supposition that they are all of the India-rubber species. Enough of this, in all conscience, we have, and to spare; but for the legitimate rain-cloud, with its ragged and

§ 6. The old masters have not left a single instance of the painting of the rain-cloud, and very few efforts at it. Gaspar Poussin's storms.

[1] [No. 36, "A Land Storm," and No. 95, "Dido and Æneas." For further remarks on the "India-rubber boughs" of the tree in the former picture, see below, sec. vi. ch. i. §§ 12, 13, pp. 533–4. For other references to No. 95, see below, p. 409; and *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. ii. § 18.]

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spray-like edge, its veily transparency, and its columnar burden of blessing, neither it, nor anything like it or approaching it, occurs in any painting of the old masters that I have ever seen; and I have seen enough to warrant my affirming that if it occur anywhere, it must be through accident rather than intention. Nor is there stronger evidence of any perception, on the part of these much respected artists, that there were such things in the world as mists or vapours. If a cloud under their direction ever touches a mountain, it does it effectually and as if it meant to do it. There is no mystifying the matter; here is a cloud, and there is a hill; if it is to come on at all, it comes on to some purpose, and there is no hope of its ever going off again. We have, therefore, little to say of the efforts of the old masters, in any scenes which might naturally have been connected with the clouds of the lowest region, except that the faults of form specified in considering the central clouds are, by way of being energetic or sublime, more glaringly and audaciously committed in their "storms;" and that what is a wrong form among clouds possessing form, is there given with increased generosity of fiction to clouds which have no form at all.[1]

§ 7. *The great power of the moderns in this respect.*

Supposing that we had nothing to show in modern art, of the region of the rain-cloud, but the dash of Cox, the blot of De Wint,[2] or even the ordinary stormy skies of the body of our inferior water-colour painters, we might yet laugh all efforts of the old masters to utter scorn.[3] But one, among our water-colour artists, deserves especial notice, before we ascend the

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 conclude the section thus:—
"no form at all, and that the result, however admirable or desirable it may perhaps, on principles hitherto undeveloped, be hereafter proved, is in all cases and from all hands, as far as the representation of nature is concerned, something which only ought not to amuse by its absurdity, because it ought to disgust by its falsehood."]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 read, "De Wint, the spongy breadth of Cattermole, or even . . ."]

[3] [For "utter scorn. But one," eds. 1 and 2 read:—
"utter scorn. The works of Stanfield, here, as in all other points, based on perfect knowledge, would enable us to illustrate almost every circumstance of storm, and should be our text-book, were it not that all he has done has been farther carried by a mightier hand. But one . . ."]

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steps of the solitary throne, as having done in his peculiar walk, what for faithful and pure truth, truth indeed of a limited range and unstudied application, but yet most faithful and most pure, will remain unsurpassed if not unrivalled—Copley Fielding. We are well aware how much of what he has done depends in a great degree upon particular tricks of execution, or on a labour somewhat too mechanical to be meritorious; that it is rather the *texture* than the *plan* of his sky which is to be admired, and that the greater part of what is pleasurable in it will fall rather under the head of dexterous imitation than of definite thought. But whatever detractions from his merit we may be compelled to make on these grounds, in considering art as the embodying of beauty, or the channel of mind, it is impossible, when we are speaking of truth only, to pass by his down scenes and moorland showers, of some years ago, in which he produced[1] some of the most perfect and faultless passages of[2] mist and rain-cloud which art has ever seen. Wet, transparent, formless, full of motion, felt rather by their shadows on the hills than by their presence in the sky, becoming dark only through increased depth of space, most translucent where most sombre, and light only through increased buoyancy of motion, letting the blue through their interstices, and the sunlight through their chasms, with the irregular playfulness and traceless gradation of nature herself, his skies will remain,[3] as long as their colours stand, among the most simple, unadulterated, and complete transcripts of a particular nature which art can point to. Had he painted five instead of five hundred such, and gone on to

§ 8. *Works of Copley Fielding.*

§ 9. *His peculiar truth.*

[1] [For "some years ago . . . produced," eds. 1 and 2 read :—
"five or six years ago. Since that time, we fear, he has been thinking of himself instead of nature, and has partly lost both nature and himself; but he then produced . . ."
Cf. a similar passage above, p. 323.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 here insert, "the extremely obvious and lower truths of the mist," etc. And to the word "lower" a footnote was attached, as follows: "External and obvious, as being truths of mere imitation—statements of the materials and means of nature, not of her mind."]

[3] [Eds. 1 and 2 read :—
"his skies left nothing to be desired, but an umbrella, and must remain . . ."]

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other sources of beauty, he might, there can be little doubt, have been one of our greatest artists. But it often grieves us to see how his power is limited to a particular moment, to that easiest moment for imitation, when knowledge of form may be superseded by management of the brush, and the judgment of the colourist by the manufacture of a colour; the moment when all form is melted down and drifted away in the descending veil of rain, and when the variable and fitful colours of the heaven are lost in the monotonous grey of its storm tones.* We can only account for this by supposing that there is something radically wrong in his method of study; for a man of his evident depth of feeling and pure love of truth ought not to be, cannot be, except from some strange error in his mode of out-of-door practice, thus limited in his range, and liable to decline of power. We have little doubt that almost all such failures arise from the artist's neglecting the use of the chalk,[1] and supposing that either the power of drawing forms, or the sense of their beauty, can be maintained unweakened or unblunted, without constant and laborious studies in simple

§ 10. *His weakness, and its probable cause.*

* I ought here, however, to have noted another effect of the rain-cloud, which, so far as I know, has been rendered only by Copley Fielding. It is seen chiefly in clouds gathering for rain, when the sky is entirely covered with a grey veil rippled or waved with pendent swells of soft texture, but excessively hard and liny in their edges. I am not sure that this is an agreeable or impressive form of the rain-cloud, but it is a frequent one, and it is often most faithfully given by Fielding; only in some cases the edges becoming a little doubled and harsh have given a look of failure or misadventure to some even of the best-studied passages; and something of the same hardness of line is occasionally visible in his drawing of clouds by whose nature it is not warranted.[2]

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[1] [*Cf.* below, sec. iv. ch. iii. § 27.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 did not contain the footnote, and read in the text after the words "storm tones":—

> "so surely as Copley Fielding attempts the slightest hint at cloud form, beyond the edgeless rag, which is tossed and twisted in the drift of the rain, does he become liny, hard, and expressionless,—so surely as he leaves the particular greys and browns whose harmony can scarcely be imperfect, and attempts the slightest passage of real colour, much more when he plunges into the difficulties of elaborate and elevated composition, does he become affected, false, and feeble. We can . . ."

With the passages here on Copley Fielding's fondness for rain-clouds, *cf. Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. v. § 1, and *Art of England*, § 160.]

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light and shade, of form only. The brush is at once the artist's greatest aid and enemy; it enables him to make his power available, but at the same time, it undermines his power, and unless it be constantly rejected for the pencil, never can be rightly used. But whatever the obstacle be, we do not doubt that it is one which, once seen, may be overcome or removed; and we are in the constant hope of seeing this finely minded artist shake off his lethargy, break the shackles of habit, seek in extended and right study the sources of real power, and become, what we have full faith in his capability of being, one of the leading artists of his time.

§ 11. Impossibility of reasoning on the rain-clouds of Turner from engravings.

In passing to the works of our greatest modern master, it must be premised that the qualities which constitute a most essential part of the truth of the rain-cloud are in no degree to be rendered by engraving. Its indefiniteness of torn and transparent form is far beyond the power of even our best engravers: I do not say beyond their *possible* power, if they would make themselves artists as well as workmen, but far beyond the power they actually possess: while the depth and delicacy of the greys which Turner employs or produces, as well as the refinement of his execution, are, in the nature of things, utterly beyond all imitation by the opaque and lifeless darkness of the steel. What we say of his works, therefore, must be understood as referring only to the original drawings; though we may name one or two instances in which the engraver has, to a certain degree, succeeded in distantly following the intention of the master.

§ 12. His rendering of Fielding's particular moment in the Jumièges.

Jumièges, in the Rivers of France,[1] ought, perhaps, after what we have said of Fielding, to be our first object of attention, because it is a rendering by Turner of Fielding's particular moment, and the only one existing, for Turner never repeats himself. One picture is allotted to one truth; the statement is perfectly

[1] [Plate No. 11 in *The Seine and the Loire;* the drawing is No. 155 in the National Gallery.]

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and gloriously made, and he passes on to speak of a fresh portion of God's revelation.* The haze of sunlit rain of this most magnificent picture, the gradual retirement of the dark wood into its depth, and the sparkling and evanescent light which sends its variable flashes on the abbey, figures, foliage, and foam, require no comment; they speak home at once.[1]

From this picture we should pass to the Llanthony,† which

* Compare [part ii.] sec. i. chap. iv. § 5 [p. 157].

† No conception can be formed of this picture from the engraving. It is perhaps the most marvellous piece of execution and of grey colour existing, except perhaps the drawing presently to be noticed, Land's End. Nothing else can be set beside it, even of Turner's own works, much less of any other man's.[2]

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[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 continue:—

"But let it be especially observed how we have, added to all this, just where the rainbow melts away, the wreath of swift and delicate cloud-form, left in decisive light, which Fielding could only have rendered in darkness, and even then with little more than the bare suggestion of imperfect outline; while Turner has given us in every flake a separate study of beautiful and substantial form."

Between § 12 and § 13 eds. 1–4 insert an additional section as follows:—

"But there is yet added to this noble composition an incident which may serve us at once for a farther illustration of the nature and forms of cloud, and for a final proof how deeply and philosophically Turner has studied them.

§ 13. *Illustration of the nature of clouds in the opposed forms of smoke and steam.*

"'We have, on the right of the picture, the steam and the smoke of a passing steamboat. Now steam is nothing but an artificial cloud in the process of dissipation; it is as much a cloud as those of the sky itself, that is, a quantity of moisture rendered visible in the air by imperfect solution. Accordingly, observe how exquisitely irregular and broken are its forms, how sharp and spray-like, but with all the facts observed which were pointed out in chap. ii. of this section, the convex side to the wind, the sharp edge on that side, the other soft and lost. Smoke, on the contrary, is an actual substance, existing independently in the air; a solid, opaque body, subject to no absorption or dissipation but that of tenuity. Observe its volumes; there is no breaking up nor disappearing here; the wind carries its elastic globes before it, but does not dissolve nor break them.‡ Equally convex and void of angles on all sides, they are the exact representatives of the clouds of the old masters, and serve at once to show the ignorance and falsehood of these latter, and the accuracy of study which has guided Turner to the truth.'"

‡ "It does not do so until the volumes lose their density by inequality of motion, and by the expansion of the warm air which conveys them. They are then, of course, broken into forms resembling those of clouds."]

[2] [For the "Llanthony," *cf.* below, p. 489. Elsewhere Ruskin refers to the "Llanthony" as one of the very noblest of Turner's second period (*Pre-Raphaelitism*, § 50). He there compares it with an early sketch of the same scene (about 1795) as an instance of the painter's tenacity of memory and recurrence to early impressions. For the drawing of Land's End, see below, § 15.]

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is the rendering of the moment immediately following that given in the Jumièges. The shower is here half exhausted, half passed by, the last drops are rattling faintly through the glimmering hazel boughs, the white torrent, swelled by the sudden storm, flings up its hasty jets of springing spray to meet the returning light; and these, as if the heaven regretted what it had given, and were taking it back, pass as they leap, into vapour, and fall not again, but vanish in the shafts of the sunlight;* hurrying, fitful, wind-woven sunlight, which glides through the thick leaves, and paces along the pale rocks like rain; half conquering, half quenched by the very mists which it summons itself from the lighted pastures as it passes, and gathers out of the drooping herbage and from the streaming crags; sending them with messages of peace to the far summits of the yet unveiled mountains, whose silence is still broken by the sound of the rushing rain.

§ 13. *Moment of retiring rain in the Llanthony;*

With this noble work we should compare one of which we can better judge by the engraving, the Loch Coriskin, in the illustrations to Scott,[1] because it introduces us to another and a most remarkable instance of the artist's vast and varied knowledge. When rain falls on a mountain composed chiefly of barren rocks, their surfaces, being violently heated by the sun, whose most intense warmth always precedes rain, occasion sudden and violent evaporation, actually converting the first shower into steam. Consequently, upon all such hills, on the commencement of rain, white volumes of vapour are

§ 14. *And of commencing, chosen with peculiar meaning for Loch Coriskin.*

* I know no effect more strikingly characteristic of the departure of a storm than the *smoking* of the mountain torrents. The exhausted air is so thirsty of moisture, that every jet of spray is seized upon by it, and converted into vapour as it springs; and this vapour rises so densely from the surface of the steam as to give it the exact appearance of boiling water. I have seen the whole course of the Arve at Chamonix one line of dense cloud, dissipating as soon as it had risen ten or twelve feet from the surface, but entirely concealing the water from an observer placed above it.

[1] [Loch Coriskin was engraved in vol. x. of Scott's *Poetical Works* (1834).]

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J. M. W. Turner R.A.

Allen & Co. Sc.

Llanthony Abbey.

From the Drawing in the Collection of Lord Egerton of Mount Edgcumbe.

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instantaneously and universally formed, which rise, are absorbed by the atmosphere, and again descend in rain to rise in fresh volumes until the surfaces of the hills are cooled. Where there is grass or vegetation, this effect is diminished; where there is foliage it scarcely takes place at all. Now this effect has evidently been especially chosen by Turner for Loch Coriskin, not only because it enabled him to relieve its jagged forms with veiling vapour, but to tell the tale which no pencilling could, the story of its utter absolute barrenness of unlichened, dead, desolated rock:

> "The wildest glen, but this, can show
> Some touch of nature's genial glow;
> On high Benmore green mosses grow,
> And heath-bells bud in deep Glencoe,
> And copse on Cruchan-Ben;
> But here,—above, around, below,
> On mountain, or in glen,
> Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
> Nor aught of vegetative power,
> The weary eye may ken;
> For all is rocks at random thrown,
> Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone."
>
> —*Lord of the Isles*, Canto III.[1]

Here, again, we see the absolute necessity of scientific and entire acquaintance with nature, before this great artist can be understood. That which, to the ignorant, is little more than an unnatural and meaningless confusion of steam-like vapour, is to the experienced such a full and perfect expression of the character of the spot, as no means of art could have otherwise given.

In the Long Ships Lighthouse, Land's End, we have clouds[2]

[1] [St. xiv. See Appendix vi., p. 686.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 read:—

"The 'Long Ships Lighthouse, Land's End,' is, perhaps, a finer instance of the painting of the rain-cloud than any yet given. Taken as a whole, it is, perhaps, the noblest drawing of Turner's existing. The engraving is good, as a plate, but conveys not the slightest idea of the original. We have here clouds . . ."

Turner's drawing of the Long Ships Lighthouse (a mile from the shore of Land's End) was published in No. 20 of *England and Wales*. The drawing (now in the

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without rain, at twilight, enveloping the cliffs of the coast, but concealing nothing, every outline being visible through their gloom; and not only the outline, for it is easy to do this, but the *surface*. The bank of rocky coast approaches the spectator inch by inch, felt clearer and clearer as it withdraws from the garment of cloud; not by edges more and more defined, but by a surface more and more unveiled. We have thus the painting, not of a mere transparent veil,[1] but of a solid body of cloud, every inch of whose increasing distance is marked and felt. But the great wonder of the picture is the intensity of gloom which is attained in pure warm grey, without either blackness or blueness. It is a gloom dependent rather on the enormous space and depth indicated, than on actual pitch of colour; distant by real drawing, without a grain of blue; dark by real substance, without a stroke of blackness: and with all this, it is not formless, but full of indications of character, wild, irregular, shattered, and indefinite; full of the energy of storm, fiery in haste, and yet flinging back out of its motion the fitful swirls of bounding drift, of tortured vapour tossed up like men's hands, as in defiance of the tempest, the jets of resulting whirlwind, hurled back from the rocks into the face of the coming darkness, which, beyond all other characters, mark the raised passion of the elements. It is this untraceable,[2] unconnected, yet perpetual form, this fulness of character absorbed in universal energy, which distinguish nature and Turner from all their imitators. To roll a volume of smoke before the wind, to indicate motion or violence by monotonous similarity of line and direction, is for the multitude; but to mark the independent passion, the tumultuous separate existence, of every wreath of writhing vapour, yet swept away

§ 15. The drawing of transparent vapour in the Land's End.

collection of Mr. John E. Taylor) is engraved by photogravure in vol. ii. of *Turner and Ruskin*. A portion of the foreground, engraved by Armytage from a drawing by Ruskin, is here given (plate facing p. 566, see note above, on p. liv.).]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 here insert, "like Fielding's rain."]

[2] [In eds. 1–4 a marginal note was added here :—§ 17 : "The individual character of its parts."]

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and overpowered by one omnipotence of storm, and thus to bid us

> "Be as a presence or a motion—one
> Among the many there; and while the mists
> Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
> And phantoms from the crags and solid earth,
> As fast as a musician scatters sounds
> Out of an instrument,"—[1]

this belongs only to nature and to him.

§ 16. *Swift rain-cloud in the Coventry.*[2]

The drawing of Coventry may be particularized as a farther example of this fine suggestion of irregularity and fitfulness, through very constant parallelism of direction, both in rain and clouds. The great mass of cloud which traverses the whole picture is characterized throughout by severe right lines, nearly parallel with each other, into which every one of its wreaths has a tendency to range itself; but no one of these right lines is actually and entirely parallel to any other, though all have a certain tendency, more or less defined in each, which impresses the mind with the most distinct *idea* of parallelism. Neither are any of the lines actually straight and unbroken; on the contrary, they are all made up of the most exquisite and varied curves, and it is the imagined line which joins the apices of these, a tangent to them all, which is in reality straight.* They are suggested, not represented, right lines: but the whole volume of cloud is visibly and totally bounded by them; and, in consequence, its whole body is felt to be dragged out and elongated by the force of the tempest which it carries with it, and every one of its wreaths to be (as was before explained) not so much something borne *before* or *by* the wind, as the visible form and presence of the wind itself. We could not possibly point out a more magnificent piece of drawing as a contrast to such works

§ 17. *Compared with forms given by Salvator.*

* Note especially the dark uppermost outline of the mass.

[1] [Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Book iv.]

[2] [In eds. 1–4 the marginal note runs, "Deep studied form of swift rain-cloud in the 'Coventry.'" The drawing of Coventry was published in No. 17 of *England and Wales*.]

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of Salvator as that before alluded to (159 Dulwich Gallery).[1] Both are rolling masses of connected cloud; but in Turner's there is not one curve that repeats another, nor one curve in itself monotonous, or without character, and yet every part and portion of the cloud is rigidly subjected to the same forward, fierce, inevitable influence of storm. In Salvator's every curve repeats its neighbour, every curve is monotonous in itself, and yet the whole cloud is curling about hither and thither, evidently without the slightest notion where it is going to, and unregulated by any general influence whatsoever. I could not bring together two finer or more instructive examples, the one of everything that is perfect, the other of everything that is childish or abominable, in the representation of the same facts.

§ 18. Entire expression of tempest by minute touches and circumstances in the Coventry.

But there is yet more to be noticed in this noble sky of Turner's. Not only are the lines of the rolling cloud thus irregular in their parallelism, but those of the falling rain are equally varied in their direction, indicating the gusty changefulness of the wind, and yet kept so straight and stern in their individual descent, that we are not suffered to forget its strength. This impression is still farther enhanced by the drawing of the smoke, which blows every way at once, yet turning perpetually in each of its swirls back in the direction of the wind, but so suddenly and violently as almost to assume the angular lines of lightning. Farther, to complete the impression, be it observed that all the cattle, both upon the near and distant hill-side, have left off grazing, and are standing stock still and stiff, with their heads down and their backs to the wind; and finally, that we may be told not only what the storm is, but what it has been, the gutter at the side of the road is gushing in a complete torrent, and particular attention is directed to it by the full burst of light in the sky being brought just above it, so that all its waves are bright with the reflection.

[1] [Now No. 137. See also pp. 375, 477.]

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But I have not quite done with this noble picture yet.[1] Impetuous clouds, twisted rain, flickering sunshine, fleeting shadow, gushing water, and oppressed cattle, all speak the same story of tumult, fitfulness, power, and velocity. Only one thing is wanted, a passage of repose to contrast with it all; and it is given. High and far above the dark volumes of the swift rain-cloud, are seen on the left, through their opening, the quiet, horizontal, silent flakes of the highest cirrus, resting in the repose of the deep sky. Of all else that we have noticed in this drawing, some faint idea can be formed from the engraving; but of the delicate and soft forms of these pausing vapours not the slightest, and still less of the exquisite depth and palpitating tenderness of the blue with which they are islanded. Engravers, indeed, invariably lose the effect of all passages of cold colour, under the mistaken idea that it is to be kept *pale* in order to indicate distance; whereas it ought commonly to be darker than the rest of the sky.[2]

§ 19. Especially by contrast with a passage of extreme repose.

To appreciate the full truth of this passage, we must understand another effect peculiar to the rain-cloud, that its openings exhibit the purest[3] blue which the sky ever shows. For as we saw, in the first chapter in this section, that aqueous vapour always turns the sky more or less grey, it follows that we never can see the azure so intense as when the greater part of this vapour has just fallen in rain. Then, and then only, pure blue sky becomes visible in the first openings, distinguished especially by the manner in which the clouds melt into it; their edges passing off in faint white threads and fringes, through which the blue shines more and more intensely, till the last trace of vapour is lost in its perfect colour. It is only the upper

§ 20. The truth of this particular passage. Perfectly pure blue sky only seen after rain, and how seen.

[1] [Ed. 1 (only) opens this section thus:—
"Find me such a magnificent statement of all truth as this among the old masters, and I will say their works are worth something. But I have not quite done," etc.]

[2] [The sentence, "Engravers . . . rest of the sky," was first added in ed. 2.]

[3] [For "purest," ed. 1 (only) reads, "purest and most perfect."]

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white clouds, however, which do this, or the last fragments of rain-clouds becoming white as they disappear, so that the blue is never *corrupted* by the cloud, but only paled and broken with pure white, the purest white which the sky ever shows. Thus we have a melting and palpitating colour, never the same for two inches together, deepening and broadening here and there into intensity of perfect azure, then drifting and dying away, through every tone of pure pale sky, into the snow white of the filmy cloud. Over this roll the determined edges of the rain-clouds, throwing it all far back, as a retired scene, into the upper sky. Of this effect[1] the old masters, as far as I remember, have taken no cognizance whatsoever; all with them is, as we partially noticed before, either white cloud or pure blue: they have no notion of any double dealing or middle measures. They bore a hole in the sky, and let you up into a pool of deep stagnant blue, marked off by the clear round edges of imperturbable impenetrable cloud on all sides; beautiful in positive colour, but totally destitute of that exquisite gradation and change, that fleeting, panting, hesitating effort, with which the first glance of the natural sky is shed through the turbulence of the earth-storm.

§ 21. Success of our water-colour artists in its rendering. Use of it by Turner.

They have some excuse, however, for not attempting this, in the nature of their material, as one accidental dash of the brush with water-colour, on a piece of wet or damp paper, will come nearer the truth and transparency of this rain-blue than the labour of a day in oils; and the purity and felicity of some of the careless, melting, water-colour skies of Cox and Tayler[2] may well make us fastidious in all effects of this kind. It is, however, only in the drawings of Turner that we have this perfect transparency and variation of blue given, in association with the perfection of considered form. In Tayler and Cox the forms are always partially accidental and

[1] [Opposite "of this effect," etc., eds. 1–4 have a marginal note, "§ (23). Absence of this effect in the works of the old masters."]

[2] [For Cox, see above, p. 46 *n.*; for Tayler, p. 120 *n.*]

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unconsidered, often essentially bad, and always incomplete: in Turner the dash of the brush is as completely under the rule of thought and feeling as its slowest line; all that it does is perfect, and could not be altered even in a hair's-breadth without injury; in addition to this, peculiar management and execution are used in obtaining quality in the colour itself, totally different from the manipulation of any other artist; and none, who have ever spent so much as one hour of their lives over his drawing, can forget those dim passages of dreamy blue, barred and severed with a thousand delicate and soft and snowy forms, which, gleaming in their patience of hope between the troubled rushings of the racked earth-cloud, melt farther and farther back into the height of heaven until the eye is bewildered and the heart lost in the intensity of their peace. I do not say that this is beautiful, I do not say it is ideal or refined, I only ask you to watch for the first opening of the clouds after the next south rain, and tell me if it be not *true*.

§ 22. Expression of near rain-cloud in the Gosport, and other works.

The Gosport[1] affords us an instance more exquisite even than the passage above named in the Coventry, of the use of this melting and dewy blue, accompanied by two distances of rain-cloud; one towering over the horizon, seen blue with excessive distance through crystal atmosphere; the other breaking overhead in the warm sulphurous fragments of spray, whose loose and shattering transparency, being the most essential characteristic of the near rain-cloud, is precisely that which the old masters are sure to contradict.

§ 23. Contrasted with Gaspar Poussin's rain-cloud in the Dido and Æneas.

Look, for instance, at the wreaths of *cloud* (?) in the Dido and Æneas of Gaspar Poussin,[2] with their unpleasant edges cut as hard and solid and opaque and smooth as thick black paint can make them, rolled up over one another like a dirty sail badly

[1] [*England and Wales*, No. 11. The drawing was in the Ruskin collection: "the second drawing of his I ever possessed." See, for another description of it, *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, No. 37; for its acquisition, *Præterita*, ii. ch. i. § 12; and for a reference to the figure-drawing in it, *Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House*, *s.* No. 522. It is engraved in vol. i. of *Turner and Ruskin*.]

[2] [*Cf.* above, p. 396.]

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reefed. Or look at the agreeable transparency and variety of the cloud-edge where it cuts the mountain in N. Poussin's Phocion;[1] and compare this with the wreaths which float across the precipice in the second vignette in Campbell, or which gather around the Ben Lomond, the white rain gleaming beneath their dark transparent shadows; or which drift up along the flanks of the wooded hills, called from the river by the morning light in the Oakhampton; or which island the crags of Snowdon in the Llanberis, or melt along the Cumberland hills, while Turner leads us across the sands of Morecambe Bay.[2] This last drawing deserves especial notice. It is of an evening in spring, when the south rain has ceased at sunset; and, through the lulled and golden air, the confused and fantastic mists float up along the hollows of the mountains, white and pure, the resurrection in spirit of the new fallen rain, catching shadows from the precipices, and mocking the dark peaks with their own mountain-like but melting forms till the solid mountains seem in motion like those waves of cloud, emerging and vanishing as the weak wind passes by their summits; while the blue level night advances along the sea, and the surging breakers leap up to catch the last light from the path of the sunset.

§ 24. *Turner's power of rendering mist.*

I need not, however, insist upon Turner's peculiar power of rendering *mist*, and all those passages of confusion between earth and air, when the mountain is melting into the cloud, or the horizon into the twilight; because his supremacy in these points is altogether undisputed, except by persons to whom it would be impossible to prove anything which did not fall under the form of

[1] [National Gallery, No. 40. See above, pp. 263 *n.*, 305.]

[2] [The second vignette in Campbell (1837) is the "Andes Coast" (*cf.* below, pp. 417, 434). The "Ben Lomond" is "Loch Lomond" (vignette for Rogers' *Poems*), drawing No. 240 in the National Gallery (*cf.* below, p. 550). The "Oakhampton" (properly Okehampton) was published in No. 5 of *England and Wales* (*cf.* above, p. 235). "Llanberis" was in No. 18 of the same; see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi. § 8 *n.*, where a portion of the drawing is engraved, Plate 80). The drawing in which "Turner leads us across the sands of Morecambe Bay" is the "Heysham," in the Ruskin collection; see *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, No. 25, and, for another description of it, *Elements of Drawing*, § 244. It is engraved in *Turner and Ruskin*.]

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J. M. W. Turner, R.A. Allen & Co. Sc.

Okehampton Castle.

From the Drawing in possession of James Orrock, Esquire.

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a Rule of Three. Nothing is more natural than that the studied form and colour of this great artist should be little understood, because they require, for the full perception of their meaning and truth, such knowledge and such time as not one in a thousand possesses, or can bestow; but yet the truth of them for that very reason is capable of demonstration, and there is hope of our being able to make it in some degree felt and comprehended even by those to whom it is now a dead letter, or an offence. But the aërial[1] and misty effects of landscape, being matters of which the eye should be simply cognizant, and without effort of thought, as it is of light, must, where they are exquisitely rendered, either be felt at once, or prove that degree of blindness and bluntness in the feelings of the observer which there is little hope of ever conquering. Of course, for persons who have never seen in their lives a cloud vanishing on a mountain side, and whose conceptions of mist or vapour are limited to ambiguous outlines of spectral hackney-coaches and bodiless lamp-posts, discerned through a brown combination of sulphur, soot, and gas-light, there is yet some hope; we cannot indeed tell them what the morning mist is like in mountain air, but far be it from us to tell them that they are incapable of feeling its beauty if they will seek it for themselves. But if you have ever in your life had one opportunity, with your eyes and heart open, of seeing the dew rise from a hill pasture, or the storm gather on a sea-cliff, and if you yet have no feeling for the glorious passages of mingled earth and heaven which Turner calls up before you into breathing tangible being, there is indeed no hope for your apathy, art will never touch you, nor nature inform.[2]

[1] [Opposite "But the aërial," etc., eds. 1–4 have a marginal note: "§ 28. His effects of mist so perfect that, if not at once understood, they can no more be explained or reasoned on than nature herself."]

[2] [Eds. 1–4 here insert a further paragraph :—

"It would be utterly absurd, among the innumerable passages of the kind given throughout his works, to point to one as more characteristic or more perfect than another. The 'Simmer Lake, near Askrig,' for expression of mist pervaded with sunlight, —the 'Lake Lucerne,' a recent and unengraved drawing, for the recession of near mountain form, not into dark, but into *luminous* cloud,

§ 29. *Various instances.*

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One word respecting Turner's more violent storms; for we have hitherto been speaking only of the softer rain-clouds, associated with gusty tempests, but not of the thunder-cloud and the whirlwind. If there be any one point in which engravers disgrace themselves more than in another, it is in their rendering of dark and furious storm. It appears to be utterly impossible to force it into their heads that an artist does *not* leave his colour with a sharp edge and an angular form by accident, or in order that they may have the pleasure of altering it and improving upon it; and equally impossible to persuade them that energy and gloom may in *some* circumstances be arrived at without any extraordinary expenditure of ink. I am aware of no engraver of the present day whose ideas of a storm-cloud are not comprised under two heads, roundness and blackness; and, indeed, their general principles of translation (as may be distinctly gathered from their larger works) are the following:—1. Where the drawing is grey, make the paper black. 2. Where the drawing is white, cover the paper with zigzag lines. 3. Where the drawing has particularly tender tones, cross-hatch them. 4. Where any outline is particularly angular, make it round. 5. Where there are vertical reflections in water, express them with very distinct horizontal lines. 6. Where there is a passage of particular simplicity, treat it in sections. 7. Where there is anything intentionally concealed, make it out. Yet, in spite of the necessity which

§ 25. Turner's more violent effects of tempest are never rendered by engravers.

§ 26. General system of landscape engraving.

the most difficult thing to do in art,—the 'Harlech' for expression of the same phenomena, shown over vast spaces in distant ranges of hills,—the 'Ehrenbreitstein,' a recent drawing, for expression of mist rising from the surface of water at sunset, and, finally, the glorious 'Oberwessel' and 'Nemi,'* for passages of all united, may, however, be named, as noble instances, though in naming five works I insult five hundred."

* In the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq., of Tottenham.

The "Simmer (Semer) Lake, near Askrig" was engraved in *Richmondshire*. The "Lake Lucerne" must be one of the drawings of that subject referred to in the Epilogue to Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*. The "Harlech" was in No. 21 of *England and Wales*. The "Ehrenbreitstein" was in Ruskin's collection; see No. 62 in the *Notes*. It is engraved in *Turner and Ruskin*. "Oberwessel" and "Nemi," in the Windus Collection, were engraved in Finden's *Royal Gallery of British Art*.]

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all engravers impose upon themselves of rigidly observing this code of general laws, it is difficult to conceive how such pieces of work as the plates of Stonehenge and Winchelsea could ever have been presented to the public, as in any way resembling, or possessing even the most fanciful relation to, the Turner drawings of the same subjects.[1] The original of the Stonehenge is perhaps the standard of storm-drawing, both for the overwhelming power and gigantic proportions and spaces of its cloud forms, and for the tremendous qualities of lurid and sulphurous colours which are gained in them. All its forms are marked with violent angles, as if the whole muscular energy, so to speak, of the cloud were writhing in every fold: and their fantastic and fiery volumes have a peculiar horror, an awful life, shadowed out in their strange, swift, fearful outlines which oppress the mind more than even the threatening of their gigantic gloom. The white lightning, not as it is drawn by less observant or less capable painters, in zigzag fortifications, but in its own dreadful irregularity of streaming fire, is brought down, not merely over the dark clouds, but through the full light of an illumined opening to the blue, which yet cannot abate the brilliancy of its white line; and the track of the last flash along the ground is fearfully marked by the dog howling over the fallen shepherd, and the ewe pressing her head upon the body of her dead lamb.[2]

§ 27. *The storm in the Stonehenge.*

[1] [The "Winchelsea" was in Ruskin's collection; see *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*, No. 34. His father gave it him for a birthday present in 1840; see *Præterita*, ii. ch. i. § 13. The plate was published in No. 10 of *England and Wales*. The engraver was J. Henshall. "Stonehenge," in No. 7 of the same, was engraved by R. Wallis.]

[2] [The truth to nature of Turner's representations of lightning flashes is the subject of a paper by Mr. Ralph Inwards in the *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society*, vol. xxii., No. 98, April 1896 (reprinted in pamphlet form). Mr. Inwards reproduced Turner's representation (in his drawing of the Bass Rock) with a photograph of a real flash of lightning. "It will be seen," he says, "that Turner has caught the general form and character of the rapid contortions and abrupt curves of the lightning with a most amazing fidelity." After noticing various other representations of lightning in Turner's drawings, Mr. Inwards says that "any one of them would be found to convey faithfully to the mind all that the highest powers of sight can discover in the phenomena. One is inclined to take literally the eulogium passed by John Ruskin on this great master: 'Unfathomable in knowledge, solitary in power . . . sent as a prophet to reveal to men the mysteries of the universe.'"]

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I have not space, however, to enter into examination of Turner's storm-drawing; I can only warn the public against supposing that its effect is ever rendered by engravers. The great principles of Turner are, angular outline, vastness and energy of form, infinity of gradation, and depth without blackness. The great principles of the engravers (*vide* Pæstum, in Rogers's Italy,[1] and the Stonehenge above alluded to) are, rounded outline, no edges, want of character, equality of strength, and blackness without depth.

§ 28. General character of such effects as given by Turner. His expression of falling rain.

I have scarcely, I see, on referring to what I have written, sufficiently insisted on Turner's rendering of the rainy *fringe;* whether in distances, admitting or concealing more or less of the extended plain, as in the Waterloo, and Richmond (with the girl and dog in the foreground); or, as in the Dunstaffnage, Glencoe, St. Michael's Mount, and Slave-ship,[2] not reaching the earth, but suspended in waving and twisted lines from the darkness of the zenith. But I have no time for farther development of particular points; I must defer discussion of them until we take up each picture to be viewed as a whole; for the division of the sky which I have been obliged to make, in order to render fully understood the peculiarities of character in the separate cloud regions, prevents my speaking of any one work with justice to its concentration of various truth. Be it always remembered that we pretend not, at present, to give any account or idea of the sum of the works of any painter, much less of the universality of Turner's; but only to explain in what real truth, as far as it is explicable, consists, and to illustrate it by those pictures in which it most distinctly

§ 29. Recapitulation of the section.

[1] [At p. 207. The drawing is No. 206 in the National Gallery; the lightning, which is a feature in the plate, was, however, not given in the drawing.]

[2] [A picture of "Waterloo" was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1818; a drawing was engraved as an illustration to vol. xiv. of Byron's *Works* (1834), and to vol. xvi. of Scott's *Prose Works*. It is the last which is here referred to. For the "Richmond," see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vi. ch. v. § 9, where a portion of the foreground is engraved (Plate 55). "Dunstaffnage" was engraved in vol. xxiv. of Scott's *Works*; "Glencoe" in vol. xxv. of the same; "St. Michael's Mount" in No. 24 of *England and Wales*. For other references to the "Slave-ship," see below, p. 571 n.]

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occurs, or from which it is most visibly absent. And it will only be in the full and separate discussion of individual works, when we are acquainted also with what is beautiful, that we shall be completely able to prove or disprove the presence of the truth of nature.

The conclusion, then, to which we are led by our present examination of the truth of clouds is, that the old masters attempted the representation of only one among the thousands of their systems of scenery, and were altogether false in the little they attempted; while we can find records in modern art of every form or phenomenon of the heavens from the highest film that glorifies the æther to the wildest vapour that darkens the dust, and in all these records, we find the most clear language and close thought, firm words and true message, unstinted fulness and unfailing faith.

§ 30. Sketch of a few of the skies of nature taken as a whole, compared with the works of Turner and of the old masters.[1]

And indeed it is difficult for us to conceive how, even without such laborious investigation as we have gone through, any person can go to nature for a single day or hour, when she is really at work in any of her nobler spheres of action, and yet retain respect for the old masters; finding, as find he will, that every scene which rises, rests, or departs before him, bears with it a thousand glories of which there is not one shadow, one image, one trace or line, in any of their works; but which will illustrate to him, at every new instant, some passage which he had not before understood in the high works of modern art.

§ 31. Morning on the plains.

Stand upon the peak of some isolated mountain at daybreak,[2] when the night mists first rise from off the plains,

[1] [Eds. 1–4 read, "old masters. Morning on the plains," and omit marginal note to § 31.]

[2] [§§ 31–34 are § 25 in *Frondes Agrestes*, but in that book the refrain, "Has Claude given this?" is omitted. At this point Ruskin added the following note in *Frondes Agrestes*:—

> "I forget now what all this is about. It seems to be a recollection of the Rigi, with assumption that the enthusiastic spectator is to stand for a day and night in observation; to suffer the effects of a severe thunder-storm, and to get neither breakfast nor dinner. I have seen such a storm on the Rigi, however, and more than one such sunrise; and I much doubt if its present visitors by rail will see more."

The description in the text was a reminiscence of a thing seen and recorded at the

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and watch their white and lake-like fields, as they float in level bays and winding gulfs about the islanded summits of the lower hills, untouched yet by more than dawn, colder and more quiet than a windless sea under the moon of midnight; watch when the first sunbeam is sent upon the silver channels, how the foam of their undulating surface parts and passes away, and down under their depths the glittering city and green pasture lie like Atlantis,[1] between the white paths of winding rivers; the flakes of light falling every moment faster and broader among the starry spires, as the wreathed surges break and vanish above them, and the confused crests and ridges of the dark hills shorten their grey shadows upon the plain.[2] Has Claude given this? Wait a little longer, and you shall see those scattered mists rallying in the ravines, and floating up towards you, along the winding valleys, till they crouch in quiet masses, iridescent with the morning light,* upon the broad breasts of the higher hills, whose leagues of massy undulation will melt back and back into that robe of material light, until they fade away, lost in its lustre, to appear again above, in the serene heaven, like a wild, bright, impossible dream, foundationless and inaccessible, their very bases vanishing in the unsubstantial and mocking blue of the deep lake below.† Has Claude given this? Wait yet a little longer, and you shall see those mists gather themselves into white towers, and stand like fortresses along the promontories, massy and motionless, only piled with every instant higher and higher

§ 32. *Noon with gathering storms.*

* I have often seen the white, thin, morning cloud, edged with the seven colours of the prism. I am not aware of the cause of this phenomenon, for it takes place not when we stand with our backs to the sun, but in clouds near the sun itself, irregularly and over indefinite spaces, sometimes taking place in the body of the cloud. The colours are distinct and vivid, but have a kind of metallic lustre upon them.

† Lake Lucerne.

time—namely, in the middle of August 1835. Ruskin made his record in a rhyming letter to a friend: see "A Letter from Abroad" and the note thereon, in Vol. II. pp. 435–436.]

[1] [See Plato's description of the mythical island, in *Critias*, 113–120.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 add note, "Vignette to Milton: 'Temptation on the Mountain.'"]

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into the sky,* and casting longer shadows athwart the rocks; and out of the pale blue of the horizon you will see forming and advancing a troop of narrow, dark, pointed vapours,† which will cover the sky, inch by inch, with their grey network, and take the light off the landscape with an eclipse which will stop the singing of the birds and the motion of the leaves, together; and then you will see horizontal bars of black shadow forming under them, and lurid wreaths create themselves, you know not how, along the shoulders of the hills; you never see them form, but when you look back to a place which was clear an instant ago, there is a cloud on it, hanging by the precipices, as a hawk pauses over his prey.‡ Has Claude given this? And then you will hear the sudden rush of the awakened wind, and you will see those watch-towers of vapour swept away from their foundations, and waving curtains of opaque rain let down to the valleys, swinging from the burdened clouds in black bending fringes,§ or pacing in pale columns along the lake level, grazing its surface into foam as they go. And then, as the sun sinks, you shall see the storm drift for an instant from off the hills, leaving their broad sides smoking, and loaded yet with snow-white, torn, steam-like rags of capricious vapour, now gone, now gathered again; ‖ while the smouldering sun, seeming not far away,

§ 33. *Sunset in tempest. Serene midnight.*

* St. Maurice (Rogers's Italy).
† Vignette, the Great St. Bernard.
‡ Vignette of the Andes.
§ St. Michael's Mount (England Series).
‖ Illustration to the Antiquary. Goldau, a recent drawing of the highest order.[1]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 omit words, "Goldau . . . order." For the "Andes," see pp. 410, 434; for "St. Michael's Mount," *cf.* § 28, above, p. 414; the illustration to the *Antiquary* is of Ballyburgh Ness in Scott's *Novels* (1836). The Goldau was in Ruskin's collection (No. 65 in the *Notes*); it is engraved in vol. iv. of *Modern Painters*, see pt. v. ch. xviii. § 20 (Plate 50). "The Last Man" is Plate 12 in Campbell's *Poetical Works* (1837). For "Caerlaverock," in vol. iv. of Scott's *Poetical Works*, cf. above, p. 340. "St. Denis" is Plate 29 in *The Seine and the Loire* (the drawing, No. 145 in the National Gallery). For the "Alps at Daybreak," see above, p. 355. "Delphi" the editors are unable to identify.]

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but burning like a red-hot ball beside you, and as if you could reach it, plunges through the rushing wind and rolling cloud with headlong fall, as if it meant to rise no more, dyeing all the air about it with blood.* Has Claude given this? And then you shall hear the fainting tempest die in the hollow of the night, and you shall see a green halo kindling on the summit of the eastern hills,† brighter—brighter yet, till the large white circle of the slow moon is lifted up among the barred clouds,‡ step by step, line by line; star after star she quenches with her kindling light, setting in their stead an army of pale, penetrable, fleecy wreaths in the heaven, to give light upon the earth, which move together, hand in hand, company by company, troop by troop, so measured in their unity of motion, that the whole heaven seems to roll with them, and the earth to reel under them. Ask Claude, or his brethren, for that. And then wait yet for one hour, until the east again becomes purple,§ and the heaving mountains, rolling against it in darkness, like waves of a wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burning: watch the white glaciers blaze in their winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire: watch the columnar peaks of solitary snow, kindling downwards, chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning; their long avalanches cast down in keen streams brighter than the lightning, sending each his tribute of driven snow, like altar-smoke, up to the heaven; the rose-light of their silent domes flushing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer light through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven, one scarlet canopy, is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels: and

§ 34. *And sunrise on the Alps.*

* Vignette to Campbell's Last Man.

† Caerlaverock.

‡ St. Denis.

§ Alps at Daybreak (Rogers's Poems): Delphi, and various vignettes.

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then, when you can look no more for gladness, and when you are bowed down with fear and love of the Maker and Doer of this, tell me who has best delivered this His message unto men![1]

[1] [In the last volume of *Modern Painters* (pt. vii. ch. iv. § 1), Ruskin refers to the account of the rain-cloud in this chapter as "perhaps the best and truest piece of work done in the first volume."]

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CHAPTER V

EFFECTS OF LIGHT RENDERED BY TURNER

I HAVE before given my reasons (Sect. II. Chap. III.) for not wishing at present to enter upon the discussion of particular effects of light. Not only are we incapable of rightly viewing them, or reasoning upon them, until we are acquainted with the principles of the beautiful; but, as I distinctly limited myself, in the present portion of the work, to the examination of *general* truths, it would be out of place to take cognizance of the particular phases of light, even if it were possible to do so, before we have some more definite knowledge of the material objects which they illustrate. I shall therefore, at present, merely set down a rough catalogue of the effects of light at different hours of the day, which Turner has represented; naming a picture or two, as an example of each, which we will hereafter take up one by one, and consider the physical science and the feeling together. And I do this, in the hope that in the meantime some admirer of the old masters will be kind enough to select from the works of any one of them, a series of examples of the same effects, and to give me a reference to the pictures, so that I may be able to compare each with each; for, as my limited knowledge of the works of Claude and Poussin does not supply me with the requisite variety of effect, I shall be grateful for assistance.

§ 1. Reasons for merely, at present, naming, without examining, the particular effects of light rendered by Turner.

§ 2. Hopes of the author for assistance in the future investigation of them.

The following list, of course, does not name the hundredth part of the effects of light given by Turner; it only names those which are distinctly and markedly separate from each other, and representative each of an entire class. Ten or twelve examples, often many more, might be given of each; every one of which would display the effects of the same hour and light,

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modified by different circumstances of weather, situation, and character of objects subjected to them, and especially by the management of the sky; but it will be generally sufficient for our purposes to examine thoroughly one good example of each.

The prefixed letters express the direction of the light. F. front light, the sun in the centre, or near the top of the picture; L. lateral light, the sun out of the picture, on the right or left of the spectator; L. F. the light partly lateral, partly fronting the spectator, as when he is looking south, with the sun in the south-west; L. B. light partly lateral, partly behind the spectator, as when he is looking north, with the sun in the south-west.

MORNING

EFFECTS	NAMES OF PICTURES
L.....An hour before sunrise in winter. Violent storm, with rain, on the sea. Lighthouses seen through it.	Lowestoft, Suffolk.
F.....An hour before sunrise. Serene sky, with light clouds. Dawn in the distance.	Vignette to Voyage of Columbus.
L.....Ten minutes before sunrise. Violent storm. Torchlight.	Fowey Harbour.
F.....Sunrise. Sun only half above the horizon. Clear sky with light cirri.	Vignette to Human Life.
F.....Sun just disengaged from horizon. Misty, with light cirri.	Alps at Daybreak.
F.....Sun a quarter of an hour risen. Sky covered with scarlet clouds.	Castle Upnor.
L. F...Serene sky. Sun emerging from a bank of cloud on horizon, a quarter of an hour risen.	Orford, Suffolk.
L. F...Same hour. Light mists in flakes on hill sides. Clear air.	Skiddaw.
L. F...Same hour. Light flying rain-clouds gathering in valleys.	Oakhampton.
L. B...Same hour. A night storm rising off the mountains. Dead calm.	Lake of Geneva.
L.....Sun half an hour risen. Cloudless sky.	Beaugency.
L.....Same hour. Light mists lying in the valleys.	Kirkby Lonsdale.
F.....Same hour. Bright cirri. Sun dimly seen through battle smoke, with conflagration.	Hohenlinden.
L.....Sun an hour risen, cloudless and clear.	Buckfastleigh.

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NOON AND AFTERNOON

EFFECTS	NAMES OF PICTURES
L. B...Mid-day. Dead calm, with heat. Cloudless.	Corinth.
L.....Same hour. Serene and bright, with streaky clouds.	Lantern at St. Cloud.
L.....Same hour. Serene with multitudes of the high cirrus.	Shylock, and other Venices.
L.....Bright sun, with light wind and clouds.	Richmond, Middlesex.
F.....Two o'clock. Clouds gathering for rain, with heat.	Warwick. Blenheim.
F.....Rain beginning, with light clouds and wind.	Piacenza.
L.....Soft rain, with heat.	Caldron Snout Fall.
L.F...Great heat. Thunder gathering.	Malvern.
L.....Thunder breaking down, after intense heat, with furious winds.	Winchelsea.
L.....Violent rain and wind, but cool.	Llanberis, Coventry, etc.
L.F...Furious storm, with thunder.	Stonehenge, Pæstum, etc.
L.B...Thunder retiring, with rainbow. Dead calm, with heat.	Nottingham.
L.....About three o'clock, summer. Air very cool and clear. Exhausted thunder-clouds low on hills.	Bingen.
F.....Descending sunbeams through soft clouds, after rain.	Carew Castle.
L.....Afternoon, very clear, after rain. A few clouds still on horizon. Dead calm.	Saltash
F.....Afternoon of cloudless day, with heat.	Mercury and Argus. Oberwesel. Nemi.

EVENING

L.....An hour before sunset. Cloudless.	Trematon Castle.
F.....Half an hour before sunset. Light clouds. Misty air.	Lake Albano. Florence.
F.....Within a quarter of an hour of sunset. Mists rising. Light cirri.	Datur Hora Quieti.
L.F...Ten minutes before sunset. Quite cloudless.	Durham.
F.....Same hour. Tumultuous spray of illumined rain-cloud.	Solomon's Pools. Slave-ship.
F.....Five minutes before sunset. Sky covered with illumined cirri.	Téméraire. Napoleon. Various vignettes.

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EFFECTS	NAMES OF PICTURES
L. B...Same hour. Serene sky. Full moon rising.	Kenilworth.
F.....Sun setting. Detached light cirri and clear air.	Amboise.
L.....Same hour. Cloudless. New moon.	Troyes.
F. L...Same hour. Heavy storm-clouds. Moon-rise.	First vignette, Pleasures of Memory.
L. B...Sun just set. Sky covered with clouds. New moon setting.	Caudebec.
L. B...Sun five minutes set. Strong twilight, with storm-clouds. Full moon-rise.	Wilderness of Engedi. Assos.
L. B...Same hour. Serene, with light clouds.	Montjean.
L. B...Same hour. Serene. New moon.	Pyramid of Caius Cestius.
L. B...Sun a quarter of an hour set. Cloudless.	Château de Blois.
L. F...Sun half an hour set. Light cirri.	Clairmont.
F.....Same hour. Dead calm at sea. New moon and evening star.	Cowes.
F.....Sun three quarters of an hour set. Moon struggling through storm-clouds, over heavy sea.	Folkestone.

NIGHT

F.....An hour after sunset. No moon. Torch-light.	St. Julien, Tours.
F.....Same hour. Moon rising. Fire from furnaces.	Dudley.
L. F...Same hour, with storm-clouds. Moon rising.	Mantes.
L.....Same hour, with light of rockets and fire.	Juliet and her Nurse.
F.....Midnight. Moonless, with light-houses.	Calais.
F.....Same hour, with firelight.	Burning of Parliament Houses.
F.....Same hour. Full moon. Clear air, with delicate clouds. Light-houses.	Towers of the Héve.
F.....Same hour, with conflagration, battle smoke, and storm.	Waterloo.
F.....Same hour. Moonlight through mist. Buildings illuminated in interior.	Vignette; St. Herbert's Isle.
F.....Same hour. Full moon, with halo. Light rain-clouds.	St. Denis.
F.....Full moon. Perfectly serene. Sky covered with white cirri.	Alnwick. Vignette of Rialto and Bridge of Sighs.[1]

[1] [The drawings and pictures mentioned in the above lists are to be found in the following publications, etc :—

England and Wales:—Lowestoft, Fowey, Castle Upnor, Orford, Okehampton, Buckfastleigh, Richmond (Surrey, not Middlesex), Warwick, Blenheim, Malvern,

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Winchelsea, Llanberis, Coventry, Stonehenge, Nottingham, Carew Castle, Saltash, Trematon, Durham, Kenilworth, Cowes, Folkestone, Dudley, Alnwick.

Caldron Snout Fall (see *Rokeby*, "Where Tees in tumult leaves his source, Thundering o'er Caldron and High Force") is the first, or upper, fall on the Tees, over which there is a bridge. The drawing (in *Richmondshire* and *England and Wales*) is elsewhere referred to by Ruskin as "Chain-Bridge over the Tees" (see pp. 489, 554, 587 *n.*). The drawing of High Force, on the other hand,—the fall of the Tees five miles below Caldron Snout—is called by Ruskin "The Upper Fall of the Tees" (see pp. 486, 491, 553).

Richmondshire:—Kirkby Lonsdale.

Rogers' *Italy*:—Lake of Geneva, Paestum.

Rogers' *Poems*:—Voyage of Columbus, Human Life (*i.e.* vignette of "Tornaro," at p. 80, drawing, N.G. 230), Alps at Daybreak, "Datur Hora Quieti," Pleasures of Memory (*i.e.* "Twilight," drawing, N.G. 226), St. Herbert's Isle, Rialto.

Illustrations to *Scott*:—Skiddaw, Piacenza.

Illustrations to *Campbell*:—Hohenlinden.

Illustrations to *Byron*:—Pyramid of Caius Cestius; Bridge of Sighs.

Finden's *Bible*:—Corinth, Solomon's Pools, Wilderness of Engedi, Assos.

The Seine and the Loire:—Beaugency, Lantern at St. Cloud, Amboise, Troyes, Caudebec, Montjean, Châteaux de Blois, Clairmont, St. Julien (Tours), Mantes, Towers of the Héve, St. Denis.

Academy Pictures:—Shylock (1837, engraved in *Turner and Ruskin*), Mercury and Argus (1836), Téméraire (N.G. 524), Napoleon (N.G. 529), Juliet and her Nurse (1836), Burning of the Houses of Parliament (1835), Waterloo (1818), The Slave Ship.

Bingen (drawing) is in the Farnley collection; Calais is probably the vignette in Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*, the drawing for which is in the collection of Mr. J. E. Taylor.

Keepsake:—Lake of Albano, Florence.

Windus collection (engraved in Finden's *Royal Gallery of British Art*):—Oberwesel, Nemi.]

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SECTION IV

OF TRUTH OF EARTH

CHAPTER I

OF GENERAL STRUCTURE

§ 1. First laws of the organization of the earth, and their importance in art.

By truth of earth, we mean the faithful representation of the facts and forms of the bare ground, considered as entirely divested of vegetation, through whatever disguise, or under whatever modification the clothing of the landscape may occasion. Ground is to the landscape painter what the naked human body is to the historical. The growth of vegetation, the action of water and even of clouds upon it and around it, are so far subject and subordinate to its forms, as the folds of the dress and the fall of the hair are to the modulation of the animal anatomy. Nor is this anatomy always so concealed, but in all sublime compositions, whether of nature or art, it must be seen in its naked purity. The laws of the organization of the earth are distinct and fixed as those of the animal frame, simpler and broader, but equally authoritative and inviolable. Their results may be arrived at without knowledge of the interior mechanism; but for that very reason ignorance of them is the more disgraceful, and violation of them more unpardonable. They are in the landscape the foundation of all other truths, the most necessary, therefore, even if they were not in themselves attractive; but they are as beautiful as they are essential, and every abandonment of them by the artist must end in deformity as it begins in falsehood.

That such abandonment is constant and total in the works

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of the old masters has escaped detection, only because, of persons generally cognizant of art, few have spent time enough in hill countries to perceive the certainty of the laws of hill anatomy; and because few, even of those who possess such opportunities, ever think of the common earth beneath their feet, as anything possessing specific form, or governed by steadfast principles. That such abandonment should have taken place cannot be surprising, after what we have seen of their fidelity to skies. Those artists who, day after day, could so falsely represent what was for ever before their eyes, when it was to be one of the most important and attractive parts of their picture, can scarcely be expected to give with truth what they could see only partially and at intervals, and what was only to be in their picture a blue line in the horizon, or a bright spot under the feet of their figures.

§ 2. The slight attention ordinarily paid to them. Their careful study by modern artists.

That such should be all the space allotted by the old landscape painters to the most magnificent phenomena of nature; that the only traces of those Apennines, which in Claude's walks along the brow of the Pincian[1] for ever bounded his horizon with their azure wall, should, in his pictures, be a cold white outline in the extreme of his tame distance; and that Salvator's sojourns among their fastnesses[2] should only have taught him to shelter his banditti with such paltry morsels of crag as an Alpine stream would toss down before it like a foam-globe; though it may indeed excite our surprise, will, perhaps, when we have seen how these slight passages are executed, be rather a subject of congratulation than of regret.

[1] [Tradition ascribes to Claude as his domicile the "Tempietto" on the Trinità de' Monti, and to Poussin a neighbouring house, No. 9 of the same piazza. But it appears, from a census return, that they lived in the modern Via Paola, in the lower town. "Traditions, however, die hard. Harder in Rome, perhaps, where they have wound their roots in and out among the stones, than elsewhere. No one nurtured in the belief that Claude and Poussin lived on the Trinità de' Monti, and looked out daily over that wonderful view of Rome, will willingly surrender the belief" (*Claude Lorraine*, by George Grahame, 1895, p. 42). Poussin's morning walks on the Pincian with his friends are related by his biographer, Bellori, and Claude must often have joined him. For Claude's wanderings further afield, see above, p. 309 *n.*].

[2] [For some account of Salvator Rosa's wild life in Southern Italy, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. iv.]

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It might, indeed, have shortened our labour in the investigation of mountain truth, had not modern artists been so vast, comprehensive, and multitudinous in their mountain drawings, as to compel us, in order to form the slightest estimate of their knowledge, to enter into some examination of every variety of hill scenery. We shall first gain some general notion of the broad organization of large masses, and then take those masses to pieces, until we come down to the crumbling soil of the foreground.

§ 3. General structure of the earth. The hills are its action, the plains its rest.

Mountains are to the rest of the body of the earth, what violent muscular action is to the body of man. The muscles and tendons of its anatomy are, in the mountain, brought out with force and convulsive energy, full of expression, passion, and strength; the plains and the lower hills are the repose and the effortless motion of the frame, when its muscles lie dormant and concealed beneath the lines of its beauty, yet ruling those lines in their every undulation. This, then, is the first grand principle of the truth of the earth. The spirit of the hills is action, that of the lowlands repose; and between these there is to be found every variety of motion and of rest, from the inactive plain, sleeping like the firmament, with cities for stars, to the fiery peaks, which, with heaving bosoms and exulting limbs, with the clouds drifting like hair from their bright foreheads, lift up their Titan hands to heaven, saying, "I live for ever!"[1]

§ 4. Mountains come out from underneath the plains, and are their support.

But there is this difference between the action of the earth, and that of a living creature; that while the exerted limb marks its bones and tendons through the flesh, the excited earth casts off the flesh altogether, and its bones come out from beneath. Mountains are the bones of the earth, their highest peaks are invariably those parts of its anatomy which in the plains lie buried under five and twenty thousand feet of solid thickness of superincumbent soil, and which spring up in the mountain

[1] [§ 3 is § 33 in *Frondes Agrestes.*]

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ranges in vast pyramids or wedges, flinging their garment of earth away from them on each side. The masses of the lower hills are laid over and against their sides, like the masses of lateral masonry against the skeleton arch of an unfinished bridge, except that they slope up to and lean against the central ridge: and, finally, upon the slopes of these lower hills are strewed the level beds of sprinkled gravel, sand, and clay, which form the extent of the champaign. Here then is another grand principle of the truth of earth, that the mountains must come from under all, and be the support of all; and that everything else must be laid in their arms, heap above heap, the plains being the uppermost. Opposed to this truth is every appearance of the hills being laid upon the plains, or built upon them. Nor is this a truth only of the earth on a large scale, for every minor rock (in position) comes out from the soil about it as an island out of the sea, lifting the earth near it like waves beating on its sides.

§ 5. Structure of the plains themselves. Their perfect level, when deposited by quiet water.

Such being the structure of the framework of the earth, it is next to be remembered that all soil whatsoever, whether it is accumulated in greater quantity than is sufficient to nourish the moss or the wallflower, has been so, either by the direct transporting agency of water, or under the guiding influence and power of water. All plains capable of cultivation are deposits from some kind of water; some from swift and tremendous currents, leaving their soil in sweeping banks and furrowed ridges; others, and this is in mountain districts almost invariably the case, by slow deposit from a quiet lake in the mountain hollow, which has been gradually filled by the soil carried into it by streams, which soil is of course finally left spread at the exact level of the surface of the former lake, as level as the quiet water itself. Hence we constantly meet with plains in hill districts which fill the hollows of the hills with as perfect and faultless a level as water, and out of which the steep rocks rise at the edge, with as little previous disturbance, or indication of their forms beneath, as they do from the margin of a quiet lake. Every delta, and there is one at the

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head of every lake in every hill district, supplies an instance of this. The rocks at Altorf plunge beneath the plain which the lake has left, at as sharp an angle as they do into the lake itself beside the chapel of Tell. The plain of the Arve, at Sallenche, is terminated so sharply by the hills to the south-east,[1] that I have seen a man sleeping with his back supported against the mountain, and his legs stretched on the plain; the slope which supported his back rising 5000 feet above him, and the couch of his legs stretched for five miles before him. In distant effect these champaigns lie like deep, blue, undisturbed water, while the mighty hills around them burst out from beneath, raging and tossing like a tumultuous sea. The valleys of Meyringen, Interlachen, Altorf, Sallenche, St. Jean de Maurienne; the great plain of Lombardy itself, as seen from Milan or Padua, under the Alps, the Euganeans, and the Apennines; and the Campo Felice under Vesuvius, are a few, out of the thousand instances which must occur at once to the mind of every traveller.

§ 6. *Illustrated by Turner's Marengo.*

Let the reader now open[2] Rogers's Italy, at the seventeenth page, and look at the vignette which heads it of the Battle of Marengo.[3] It needs no comment. It cannot but carry with it, after what has been said, the instant conviction that Turner is as much of a geologist as he is of a painter.[4] It is a summary of all we have been saying, and a summary so distinct and clear, that without any

[1] [For "hills to the south-east," ed. 1 reads, "hills of the Voza," and ed. 2, "hills of the Pavillon." The pass from Les Houches to Contamines across the chain of Mont Luchat goes by the Col de Voza, or by the Pavillon Bellevue.]

[2] [For "Let the reader now open," eds. 1 and 2 read:—

"If what I have said has been well understood, I need only bid the reader open . . ."]

[3] [The drawing is No. 204 in the National Gallery.]

[4] [Not—as Ruskin elsewhere explains—because Turner made any professed study of geology, but because of his faculty of seeing into the heart of things, and seizing their essential form and character; see *e.g.* below, p. 465, and *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. xv. §§ 32 and 33, ch. xiv. § 22, ch. xvii. § 46, and *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. ii. § 11. See also *Deucalion*, ch. i. § 2, where Ruskin says of Turner's drawings of the Alps, that he "made them before geology existed; but it is only by help of geology that I can prove their power." But though Turner never studied geology, he was interested in the science, and Dr. M'Culloch, the geologist, after conversing with him, said, "That man would have been great in any and everything he chose to take up; he has such a clear, intelligent, piercing intellect" (Thornbury's *Life of Turner*, ed. 1877, p. 236).]

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such explanation it must have forced upon the mind the impression of such facts; of the plunging of the hills underneath the plain, of the perfect level and repose of this latter laid in their arms, and of the tumultuous action of the emergent summits.

§ 7. General divisions of formation resulting from this arrangement. Plan of investigation.

We find, according to this its internal structure, which, I believe, with the assistance of Turner, can scarcely now be misunderstood, that the earth may be considered as divided into three great classes of formation, which geology has already named for us. Primary: the rocks, which, though in position lower than all others, rise to form the central peaks, or interior nuclei of all mountain ranges. Secondary: the rocks which are laid in beds above these, and which form the greater proportion of all hill scenery. Tertiary: the light beds of sand, gravel, and clay, which are strewed upon the surface of all, forming plains and habitable territory for man. We shall find it convenient, in examining the truth of art, to adopt, with a little modification, the geological arrangement, considering, first, the formation and character of the highest or central peaks; next, the general structure of the lower mountains, including in this division those composed of the various slates which a geologist would call primary; and, lastly, the minutiæ and most delicate characters of the beds of these hills, when they are so near as to become foreground objects, and the structure of the common soil which usually forms the greater space of an artist's foreground. Hence our task will arrange itself into three divisions: the investigation of the central mountains, of the inferior mountains, and of the foreground.

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CHAPTER II

OF THE CENTRAL MOUNTAINS

It does not always follow, because a mountain is the highest of its group, that it is in reality one of the central range. The Jungfrau is only surpassed in elevation, in the chain of which it is a member, by the Schreckhorn and Finster-Aarhorn,[1] but it is entirely a secondary mountain. But the central peaks are usually the highest, and may be considered as the chief components of all mountain scenery in the snowy regions. Being composed of the same rocks in all countries, their external character is the same everywhere. Its chief essential points are the following:

§ 1. *Similar character of the central peaks in all parts of the world.*

Their summits are almost invariably either pyramids or wedges. Domes may be formed by superincumbent snow, or appear to be formed by the continuous outline of a sharp ridge seen transversely, with its precipice to the spectator; but wherever a rock appears, the uppermost termination of that rock will be a steep edgy ridge, or a sharp point, very rarely presenting even a gentle slope on any of its sides, but usually inaccessible unless encumbered with snow.

§ 2. *Their arrangements in pyramids or wedges, divided by vertical fissures;*

These pyramids and wedges split vertically, or nearly so, giving smooth faces of rock, either perpendicular, or very steeply inclined, which appear to be laid against the central wedge or peak, like planks upright against a wall. The surfaces of these show close parallelism; their fissures are vertical, and cut them smoothly, like the edges of shaped

[1] [The Jungfrau (13,669 ft.) is higher than the Schreckhorn (13,386 ft.); the Finster-Aarhorn is 14,026 ft.]

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planks. Often groups of these planks, if I may so call them, rise higher than those between them and the central ridge, forming detached ridges inclining towards the central one. The planks are cut transversely, sometimes by graceful curvilinear fissures, sometimes by straight fissures,[1] which are commonly parallel to the slope of one of the sides of the peak, while the main direction of the planks or leaves is parallel to that of its other side, or points directly to its summit. But the *universal* law of fracture is, first, that it is clean and sharp, having a perfectly smooth surface, and a perfectly sharp edge to all the fissures; secondly, that every fissure is steeply inclined, and that a horizontal line, or one approaching to it, is an impossibility except in some turn of a curve.

§ 3. Causing groups of rock resembling an artichoke or rose.

Hence, however the light may fall, these peaks are seen marked with sharp and defined shadows, indicating the square edges of the planks of which they are made up; which shadows sometimes are vertical, pointing to the summit, but are oftener parallel to one of the sides of the peak, and intersected by a second series, parallel to the other side. Where there has been much disintegration, the peak is often surrounded with groups of lower ridges or peaks, like the leaves of an artichoke or a rose, all evidently part and parcel of the great peak; but falling back from it, as if it were a budding flower, expanding its leaves one by one; and this last condition is in most cases the indication of the true geological structure; most of the central peaks being fanshaped in the arrangement of their beds. But this singular organization is usually concealed by the pyramidal cross-cleavages. It was discovered first, I believe, by De Saussure, and has of late been carefully examined and verified, though not accounted for, by the Swiss geologists.[2]

[1] [For some modification of this statement as the result of ten years of subsequent study, see *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. xiv. § 18.]

[2] [The end of this paragraph, "; and this last condition . . . Swiss geologists," was first added in ed. 5.]

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Now, if I were lecturing on geology, and were searching for some means of giving the most faithful idea possible of the external appearance caused by this structure of the primary hills, I should throw my geological outlines aside, and take up Turner's vignette of the Alps at Daybreak.[1] After what has been said, a single glance at it will be enough. Observe the exquisite decision with which the edge of the uppermost plank of the great peak is indicated by its clear dark side and sharp shadow; then the rise of the second low ridge on its side, only to descend again precisely in the same line; the two fissures of this peak, one pointing to its summit, the other rigidly parallel to the great slope which descends towards the sun; then the sharp white *aiguille* on the right, with the great fissure from its summit, rigidly and severely square, as marked below, where another edge of rock is laid upon it. But this is not all; the black rock in the foreground is equally a member of the mass, its chief slope parallel with that of the mountain, and all its fissures and lines inclined in the same direction; and, to complete the mass of evidence more forcibly still, we have the dark mass on the left articulated with absolute right lines, as parallel as if they had been drawn with a rule, indicating the tops of two of these huge plates or planks, pointing, with the universal tendency, to the great ridge, and intersected by fissures parallel to it. Throughout the extent of mountain, not one horizontal line, nor an approach to it, is discernible. This cannot be chance, it cannot be composition, it may not be beautiful; perhaps nature is very wrong to be so parallel, and very disagreeable in being so straight; but this *is* nature, whether we admire it or not.[2]

§ 4. The faithful statement of these facts by Turner in his Alps at Daybreak.

In the vignette illustration to Jacqueline, we have another series of peaks, whose structure is less developed, owing to

[1] [Rogers' *Poems*, p. 194; the drawing is No. 242 in the National Gallery: see above, pp. 355, 366.]

[2] [At the end of this paragraph eds. 1 and 2 have a further sentence:—
"It is such a concentration of Alpine truth as could only have been put together by one as familiar with these snowy solitudes as their own eagles."]

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their distance, but equally clear and faithful in all points, as far as it is given. But the vignette of Aosta, in the Italy, is perhaps more striking than any that could be named, for its rendering of the perfect parallelism of the lower and smaller peaks with the great lines of the mass they compose; and that of the Andes, the second in Campbell, for its indication of the multitudes of the vertical and plank-like beds arranged almost like the leaves of a flower. This last especially, one of the very noblest, most faithful, most scientific statements of mountain form which even Turner has ever made, can leave little more to be said or doubted.[1]

§ 5. Vignette of the Andes, and others.

Now, whenever these vast peaks, rising from 12,000 to 24,000 feet above the sea, form part of anything like a landscape; that is to say, whenever the spectator beholds them from the region of vegetation, or even from any distance at which it is possible to get something like a view of their whole mass, they must be at so great a distance from him as to become aërial and faint in all their details. Their summits, and all those higher masses of whose character we have been speaking, can by no possibility be nearer to him than twelve or fifteen miles; to approach them nearer he must climb, must leave the region of vegetation, and must confine his view to a part, and that a very limited one, of the mountain he is ascending. Whenever, therefore, these mountains are seen over anything like vegetation, or are seen in mass, they *must* be in the far distance. Most artists would treat a horizon fifteen miles off very much as if it were mere air; and though the greater clearness of the upper air permits the high summits to be seen with extraordinary distinctness, yet they never can by any possibility have dark or deep shadows, or intense dark relief against a

§ 6. Necessary distance, and consequent aërial effect on all such mountains.

[1] [The vignette illustration to "Jacqueline" is at p. 147 (not 145, as stated opposite) of Rogers' *Poems*; the drawing, No. 241 in the National Gallery. The "Aosta" is at p. 25 of the *Italy*; No. 203 in the National Gallery. For other references to the "Andes," see pp. 410, 417.]

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light. Clear they may be, but faint they must be; and their great and prevailing characteristic, as distinguished from other mountains, is want of apparent solidity. They rise in the morning light rather like sharp shades, cast up into the sky, than solid earth. Their lights are pure, roseate, and cloudlike; their shadows transparent, pale and opalescent, and often undistinguishable from the air around them, so that the mountain-top is seen in the heaven only by its flakes of motionless fire.

§ 7. Total want of any rendering of their phenomena in ancient art.

Now, let me once more ask, though I am sufficiently tired of asking, what record have we of anything like this in the works of the old masters? There is no vestige, in any existing picture, of the slightest effort to represent the high hill ranges; and as for such drawing of their forms as we have found in Turner, we might as well look for them among the Chinese. Very possibly it may be all quite right; very probably these men showed the most cultivated taste, and most unerring judgment, in filling their pictures with mole-hills and sand-heaps. Very probably the withered and poisonous banks of Avernus, and the sand and cinders of the Campagna, are much more sublime things than the Alps; but still what limited truth it is, if truth it be, when through the last fifty pages we have been pointing out fact after fact, scene after scene, in clouds and hills (and not individual facts or scenes, but great and important classes of them), and still we have nothing to say when we come to the old masters; but "they are not here." Yet this is what we hear so constantly called painting "general" nature.[1]

[1] [Between §§ 7 and 8 eds. 1 and 2 insert the following:—

§ 8. The perfection of Turner's vignette 'Jacqueline.'

"But open at the 145th page of Rogers' Poems. I said little of this vignette just now, when talking of structure, that I might insist upon it more forcibly as a piece of effect. Of all the pieces of mountain elevation that ever were put upon paper, perhaps this is the most soaring and impressive. The dreamy faintness of their mighty strength, the perfect stillness and silence of their distant sleep, and the fulness of sunlight in which they are bathed and lost, bear away the mind with them like a deep melody; and through all this,—through the aërial dimness out of which they rise like spectres, are told the facts and forms which speak

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§ 8. *Character of the representations of Alps, in the distances of Claude.*

Although, however, there is no vestige among the old masters of any effort to represent the attributes of the higher mountains seen in comparative proximity, we are not altogether left without evidence of their having thought of them as sources of light in the extreme distance; as for example, in that of the reputed Claude in our National Gallery, called the Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca.[1] I have not the slightest doubt of its being a most execrable copy; for there is not one touch or line of even decent painting in the whole picture; but as connoisseurs have considered it a Claude, as it has been put in our Gallery for a Claude, and as people admire it every day for a Claude, I may at least presume it has those qualities of Claude in it which are wont to excite the public admiration, though it possesses none of

§ 9. *Its peculiar expression of Alpine facts.*

of their reality like their own echoes. For instance, the highest range of rock on the extreme left is precisely the place where, in nature, there would be a little plateau or level, retiring back to the foot of the supreme summit; and as surely as there would be such a level, a kind of breathing time in the mountain before it made its last spring, so surely would that little plain be loaded with a glacier, so surely would that glacier advance to the brow of the precipice, and so surely would it hang over it, in the white tongue which in the vignette descends over the precipice exactly under the highest snowy peak. Now they are these little touches of exquisite, deep, and finished truth, which mark the vastness of Turner's intellect; they are just those which never can be generally appreciated, owing to the unavoidable want of the knowledge required to meet them. Observe how much this single bit of white tells us. It tells us that there is a glacier above those cliffs, of consistence and size; it tells us, therefore, that there is a comparatively level space on which the fallen snow can accumulate; and it tells us, therefore, that the white summits are a mile or two farther back than the rocks below them; and to make all this doubly clear, the black moraine invariably left by the falling snow at the edge of such a plain, where it first alights, is marked by the dark line crossing, nearly horizontally, under the central peak. All this speaks home at once, if we have but knowledge enough to understand it; and, be it remembered, this same white and dark touch would be equally a dead letter to us in nature herself, if we had not. A person among the Alps for the first time in his life would probably not even notice the little tongue of ice hanging over the precipice, much less would he comprehend how much it told. It could only be some one long acquainted with mountains who could tell you the width of the plateau, and how many chamois were likely to be upon it. I might name many other works of Turner, in which the same deep Alpine truth is carried out; but this alone would be sufficient to prove his unapproached superiority, at least over the ancients. What the moderns have done we shall see presently."

Eds. 1 and 2 then continue, "Although, however," etc.]

[1] [No. 12; see above, p. 41 n.]

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those which sometimes give him claim to it; and I have so reasoned, and shall continue to reason upon it, especially with respect to facts of form, which cannot have been much altered by the copyist. In the distance of that picture (as well as in that of the Sinon before Priam,[1] which I have little doubt is at least partially original, and whose central group of trees is a very noble piece of painting) is something white, which I believe must be intended for a snowy mountain, because I do not see that it can well be intended for anything else. Now no mountain of elevation sufficient to be so sheeted with perpetual snow can, by any possibility, sink so low on the horizon as this something of Claude's, unless it be at a distance of from fifty to seventy miles. At such distances, though the outline is invariably sharp and edgy to an excess, yet all the circumstances of aërial perspective, faintness of shadow, and isolation of light, which I have described as characteristic of the Alps fifteen miles off, take place, of course, in a threefold degree; the mountains rise from the horizon like transparent films, only distinguishable from mist by their excessively keen edges, and their brilliant flashes of sudden light; they are as unsubstantial as the air itself, and impress their enormous size by means of this aërialness, in a far greater degree at these vast distances, than even when towering above the spectator's head. Now, I ask of the candid observer, if there be the smallest vestige of an effort to attain, if there be the most miserable, the most contemptible, shadow of attainment of such an effect by Claude. Does that white thing on the horizon look seventy miles off? Is it faint, or fading, or to be looked for by the eye before it can be found out? Does it look high? does it look large? does it look impressive? You cannot but feel that there is not a vestige of any kind or species of truth in that horizon; and that, however artistical it may be, as giving brilliancy to the distance (though, as far as I have any feeling in the matter, it only gives coldness),

§ 9. Their total want of magnitude and aërial distance.

[1] [No. 6, also in the National Gallery, otherwise called "David at the Cave of Adullam"; see above, p. 295, and below, p. 581.]

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it is, in the very branch of art on which Claude's reputation chiefly rests, aërial perspective, hurling defiance to nature in her very teeth.

But there are worse failures yet in this unlucky distance.

§ 10. *And violation of specific form.*

Aërial perspective is not a matter of paramount importance, because nature infringes its laws herself, and boldly, too, though never in a case like this before us; but there are some laws which nature never violates, her laws of form. No mountain was ever raised to the level of perpetual snow, without an infinite multiplicity of form. Its foundation is built of a hundred minor mountains, and, from these, great buttresses run in converging ridges to the central peak. There is no exception to this rule; no mountain 15,000 feet high is ever raised without such preparation and variety of outwork. Consequently, in distant effect, when chains of such peaks are visible at once, the multiplicity of form is absolutely oceanic; and though it is possible in near scenes to find vast and simple masses composed of lines which run unbroken for a thousand feet or more, it is physically impossible when these masses are thrown seventy miles back to have simple outlines, for then these large features become mere jags and hillocks, and are heaped and huddled together in endless confusion. To get a simple form seventy miles away, mountain lines would be required unbroken for leagues; and this, I repeat, is physically impossible. Hence these mountains of Claude, having no indication of the steep vertical summits which we have shown to be the characteristic of the central ridges, having soft edges instead of decisive ones, simple forms (one line to the plain on each side) instead of varied and broken ones, and being painted with a crude raw white, having no transparency, nor filminess, nor air in it, instead of rising in the opalescent mystery which invariably characterizes the distant snows, have the forms and the colours of heaps of chalk in a lime-kiln, not of Alps. They are destitute of energy, of height, of distance, of splendour, and of variety, and are the work of a man, whether Claude or not, who had neither feeling for nature, nor knowledge of art.

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I should not, however, insist upon the faults of this picture, believing it to be a copy, if I had ever seen, even in his most genuine works, an extreme distance of Claude with any of the essential characters of nature. But although in his better pictures we have always beautiful rendering of the *air*, which in the copy before us is entirely wanting, the real features of the extreme mountain distance are equally neglected or maligned in all. There is, indeed, air between us and it; but ten miles, not seventy miles, of space. Let us observe a little more closely the practice of nature in such cases.

§ 11. *Even in his best works.*

The multiplicity of form which I have shown to be necessary in the outline, is not less felt in the body of the mass. For, in all extensive hill ranges, there are five or six lateral chains separated by deep valleys, which rise between the spectator and the central ridge, showing their tops one over another, wave beyond wave, until the eye is carried back to the faintest and highest forms of the principal chain. These successive ridges, and I speak now not merely of the Alps, but of mountains generally, even as low as 3000 feet above the sea, show themselves, in extreme distance, merely as vertical shades, with very sharp outlines, detached from one another by greater intensity, according to their nearness. It is with the utmost difficulty that the eye can discern any solidity or roundness in them; the lights and shades of solid form are both equally lost in the blue of the atmosphere, and the mountain tells only as a flat sharp-edged film, of which multitudes intersect and overtop each other, separated by the greater faintness of the retiring masses. This is the most simple and easily imitated arrangement possible, and yet, both in nature and art, it expresses distance and size in a way otherwise quite unattainable. For thus, the whole mass of one mountain being of one shade only, the smallest possible difference in shade will serve completely to detach it from another, and thus ten or twelve distances may be made evident, when the darkest and nearest is an aërial grey as

§ 12. *Farther illustration of the distant character of mountain chains.*

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faint as the sky; and the beauty of such arrangements carried out as nature carries them, to their highest degree, is, perhaps, the most striking feature connected with hill scenery. You will never, by any chance, perceive in extreme distance anything like solid form or projection of the hills. Each is a dead, flat, perpendicular film or shade, with a sharp edge darkest at the summit, and lost as it descends, and about equally dark whether turned towards the light or from it. And of these successive films of mountain you will probably have half a dozen, one behind another, all showing with perfect clearness their every chasm and peak in the outline, and not one of them showing the slightest vestige of solidity; but, on the contrary, looking so thoroughly transparent, that if it so happens, as I have seen frequently, that a conical near hill meets with its summit the separation of two distant ones, so that the right-hand slope of the nearer hill forms an apparent continuation of the right-hand slope of the left-hand farther hill, and *vice versâ*, it is impossible to get rid of the impression that one of the more distant peaks is seen *through* the other.

§ 13. *Their excessive appearance of transparency.*

I may point out, in illustration of these facts, the engravings of two drawings of precisely the same chain of distant hills; Stanfield's Borromean Islands, with the St. Gothard in the distance; and Turner's Arona, also with the St. Gothard in the distance.[1] Far be it from me to indicate the former of these plates as in any way exemplifying the power of Stanfield, or affecting his reputation; it is an unlucky drawing, murdered by the engraver, and as far from being characteristic of Stanfield as it is from being like nature: but it is just what I want, to illustrate the particular error of which I speak; and I prefer showing this error where it accidentally exists in the works of a really great artist,

§ 14. *Illustrated from the works of Turner and Stanfield. The Borromean Islands of the latter.*

[1] [Stanfield's drawing of the Isola Bella and the St. Gothard was the vignette on the title-page of Heath's *Picturesque Annual* for 1832 ("Travelling Sketches in North Italy, Tyrol, and the Rhine," with twenty-six plates after drawings by Stanfield). Turner's "Arona" (published in the *Keepsake* for 1829) was in the Ruskin collection; see No. 67 in *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*.]

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standing there alone, to pointing it out where it is confused with other faults and falsehoods in the works of inferior hands. The former of these plates is an example of everything which a hill distance is not, and the latter of everything which it is. In the former, we have the mountains covered with patchy lights, which being of equal intensity, whether near or distant, confuse all the distances together; while the eye, perceiving that the light falls so as to give details of solid form, yet finding nothing but insipid and formless spaces displayed by it, is compelled to suppose that the whole body of the hills is equally monotonous and devoid of character; and the effect upon it is not one whit more impressive and agreeable than might be received from a group of sand-heaps, washed into uniformity by recent rain.

§ 15. *Turner's Arona.*

Compare with this the distance of Turner in Arona. It is totally impossible here to say which way the light falls on the distant hills, except by the slightly increased decision of their edges turned towards it, but the greatest attention is paid to get these edges decisive, yet full of gradation, and perfectly true in character of form. All the rest of the mountain is then undistinguishable haze; and by the bringing of these edges more and more decisively over one another, Turner has given us, between the right-hand side of the picture and the snow, fifteen distinct distances, yet every one of these distances in itself palpitating, changeful, and suggesting subdivision into countless multitude. Something of this is traceable even in the engraving, and all the essential characters are perfectly well marked. I think even the least experienced eye can scarcely but feel the truth of this distance as compared with Stanfield's. In the latter, the eye gets something of the form, and so wonders it sees no more; the impression on it, therefore, is of hills within distinctly visible distance, indiscernible through want of light or dim atmosphere, and the effect is, of course, smallness of space, with obscurity of light and thickness of air. In Turner's, the eye gets nothing of the substance, and wonders it sees so much of the outline; the impression is, therefore, of

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mountains too far off to be ever distinctly seen, rendered clear by brilliancy of light and purity of atmosphere; and the effect, consequently, vastness of space, with intensity of light and crystalline transparency of air.

§ 16. Extreme distance of large objects always characterized by very sharp outline.

These truths are invariably given in every one of Turner's distances, that is to say, we have always in them two principal facts forced on our notice: transparency, or filminess of mass, and excessive sharpness of edge. And I wish particularly to insist upon this sharpness of edge, because it is not a casual or changeful habit of nature; it is the unfailing characteristic of all very great distances. It is quite a mistake to suppose that slurred or melting lines are characteristic of distant *large* objects; they may be so, as before observed, Sec. II. Chap. IV. § 4, when the focus of the eye is not adapted to them; but, when the eye is really directly to the distance, melting lines are characteristic only of thick mist and vapour between us and the object, not of the removal of the object. If a thing has character upon its outline, as a tree, for instance, or a mossy stone, the farther it is removed from us, the sharper the outline of the whole mass will become, though in doing so the particular details which make up the character will become confused in the manner described in the same chapter. A tree fifty yards from us, taken as a mass, has a soft outline, because the leaves and interstices have some effect on the eye; but put it ten miles off against the sky, and its outline will be so sharp that you cannot tell it from a rock.[1] So in a mountain five or six miles off, bushes, and heather, and roughnesses of knotty ground, and rock, have still some effect on the eye, and, by becoming confused and mingled as before described, soften the outline. But let the mountain be thirty miles off, and its edge will be as sharp as a knife. Let it, as in the case of the Alps, be seventy or

[1] [Eds. 1–4 here insert two sentences :—
"There are three trees on the Mont Salève, about eight miles from Geneva, which from the city, as they stand on the ridge of the hill, are seen defined against the sky. The keenest eye in the world could not tell them from stones."]

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eighty miles off, and though it has become so faint that the morning mist is not so transparent, its outline will be beyond all imitation for excessive sharpness. Thus, then, the character of extreme distance is always excessive keenness of edge. If you soften your outline, you either put mist between you and the object, and in doing so diminish your distance, for it is impossible you should see so far through mist as through clear air; or, if you keep an impression of clear air, you bring the object close to the observer, diminish its size in proportion, and if the aërial colours, excessive blues, etc., be retained, represent an impossibility.

§ 17. *Want of this decision in Claude.*

Take Claude's distance, in No. 244 Dulwich Gallery,* on the right of the picture.[1] It is as pure blue as ever came from the palette, laid on thick; you cannot see through it; there is not the slightest vestige of transparency or filminess about it, and its edge is soft and blunt. Hence, if it be meant for near hills, the blue is impossible, and the want of details impossible, in the clear atmosphere indicated through the whole picture. If it be meant for extreme distance, the blunt edge is impossible, and the opacity is impossible. I do not know a single distance of the Italian school to which the same observation is not entirely applicable, except, perhaps, one or two of Nicolas Poussin's. They always involve, under any supposition whatsoever, at least two impossibilities.

§ 18. *The perpetual rendering of it by Turner.*

I need scarcely mention in particular any more of the works of Turner, because there is not one of his mountain distances in which these facts are not fully exemplified. Look at the last vignette, the Farewell, in Rogers's Italy;[2] observe the excessive sharpness of all the edges, almost amounting to lines, in the

* One of the most genuine Claudes I know.

[1] ["Jacob and Laban with his Daughters, in a Landscape," now No. 205.]

[2] [The drawing for the "Farewell" (of Isola Bella, Lago Maggiore) is No. 208 in the National Gallery. For "Dunstaffnage" and "Glencoe," see above, p. 414; "Loch Achray" is in vol. 8 of Scott's *Poetical Works*; "Battle of Marengo," in Rogers' *Italy* (drawing, No. 204 in the National Gallery).]

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distance, while there is scarcely one decisive edge in the foreground. Look at the hills of the distance in the Dunstaffnage, Glencoe, and Loch Achray (Illustrations to Scott), in the latter of which the left-hand side of the Ben Venue is actually marked with a dark line. In fact, Turner's usual mode of executing these passages is perfectly evident in all his drawings; it is not often that we meet with a very broad dash of wet colour in his finished works, but in these distances, as we before saw of his shadows, all the effect has been evidently given by a dash of very moist pale colour, the paper probably being turned upside down, so that a very firm edge may be left at the top of the mountain as the colour dries. And in the Battle of Marengo we find the principle carried so far as to give nothing more than actual outline for the representation of the extreme distance, while all the other hills in the picture are distinctly darkest at the edge. This plate, though coarsely executed, is yet one of the noblest illustrations of mountain character and magnitude existing.

§ 19. *Effects of snow, how imperfectly studied.*

Such, then, are the chief characteristics of the highest peaks and extreme distances of all hills,[1] as far as the forms of the rocks themselves, and the aërial appearances especially belonging to them, are alone concerned. There is, however, yet another point

[1] [§§ 19 and 20 were substituted in ed. 3 for the following in eds. 1 and 2:—

§ 21. *Review of the Alpine drawings of modern artists generally. The great excellence of J. D. Harding.*

"Such, then, are the chief characteristics of the highest peaks and extreme distances of all hills, which we see that the old masters, taken as a body, usually neglected, and, if they touched, maligned. They fortunately did little, as whatever they did was wrong; and prudently affirmed little, as whatever they affirmed was false. The moderns have generally done all that they have done, well; but, owing to the extreme difficulty of managing or expressing the brilliancy of snow, and the peculiar character of the vertical and severe lines, which are not, under ordinary circumstances, attractive to an artist's eye, we cannot point to so many or so various examples of truth as in other cases. But nothing can be more accurate than the knowledge, or more just than the feelings of J. D. Harding, whenever he touches Alpine scenery; and he takes the bull by the horns far more frequently than any other of our artists. His magnificent 'Wengern Alp,' and his 'Chamouni,' engraved in the illustrations to Byron, are quite unequalled, even by Stanfield. The latter artist, indeed, we know not from what cause, fails, or at least falls short of what we should expect from him, more frequently in subjects of this

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to be considered, the modification of their form caused by incumbent snow.

Pictures of winter scenery are nearly as common as moonlights, and are usually executed by the same order of artists, that is to say, the most incapable; it being remarkably easy to represent the moon as a white wafer on a black ground, or to scratch out white branches on a cloudy sky. Nevertheless, among Flemish paintings several valuable representations of winter are to be found, and some clever pieces of effect among the moderns, as Hunt's for instance, and De Wint's. But all such efforts end in effect alone, nor have I ever in any single instance seen a snow *wreath*, I do not say thoroughly, but even decently drawn.*

In the range of inorganic nature, I doubt if any object can

* The best snow scenes (with this only exception, that the wreaths are not drawn) which I have ever seen are those of an almost unknown painter, Mr. Wallis (8, Cottage Grove, West Lane, Walworth). I am obliged to give his address, for his works have been again and again rejected from our exhibitions. In general, these rejections are very just; but I have known several exceptions, and this is one of the most painful.[1]

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kind than in anything else he touches. He usually makes the snowy summits a subordinate part of his picture, and does not appear to dwell upon them with fondness or delight, but to get over them as a matter of necessity. We should almost imagine that he had never made careful studies of them, for even in the few touches he gives, the intelligent drawing for which he is usually distinguished is altogether wanting. No man, however, in such subjects has suffered more from engravers; the plate of 'Inspruck' [*sic*], in the Picturesque Annual, might have been opposed to Turner's work as an instance of want of size and dignity in Alpine masses, and want of intelligence in the drawing of the snow, the dark touches on which are altogether inexpressive; and, as there is no distinction in them of dark side from shadow, might be taken for rocks, or stains, rather than for shades indicative of form. But these parts, in the original, are delicately and justly drawn, though slightly, and have very high qualities of size and distance. We shall, moreover, in speaking of the lower mountains, have better grounds for dwelling on the works of this master, as well as on those of Copley Fielding, who has most genuine feeling for hill character, but has never grappled with the central summits."

§ 22. *The apparent carelessness of Stanfield in such subjects. Fine feeling of Copley Fielding.*

Stanfield's "Innsbruck" was engraved by W. R. Smith in Heath's *Picturesque Annual* for 1832.]

[1] [This note was added in ed. 5 (1851). Joshua Wallis (1789–1862) was not a member of any art society, but exhibited occasionally at the Academy from 1809 to 1820. Ruskin's favourable notice did not secure for him any general popularity, but two of his snow scenes were bought for the "National Gallery of British Art" at the Victoria and Albert (South Kensington) Museum.]

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be found more perfectly beautiful than a fresh, deep snow drift, seen under warm light.* Its curves are of inconceivable perfection and changefulness; its surface and transparency alike exquisite; its light and shade of inexhaustible variety and inimitable finish, the shadows sharp, pale, and of heavenly colour, the reflected lights intense and multitudinous, and mingled with the sweet occurrences of transmitted light.[1] No mortal hand can approach the majesty or loveliness of it, yet it is possible, by care and skill, at least to suggest the preciousness of its forms and intimate the nature of its light and shade; but this has never been attempted; it could not be done except by artists of a rank exceedingly high, and there is something about the feeling of snow in ordinary scenery which such men do not like. But when the same qualities are exhibited on a magnificent Alpine scale, and in a position where they interfere with no feeling of life, I see not why they should be neglected, as they have hitherto been, unless that the difficulty of reconciling the brilliancy of snow with a picturesque light and shade is so great that most good artists disguise or avoid the greater part of upper Alpine scenery, and hint at the glacier so slightly that they do not feel the necessity of careful study of its forms. Habits of exaggeration increase the evil. I have seen a sketch from nature, by one of the most able of our landscape painters, in which a cloud had been mistaken for a snowy summit, and the hint thus taken exaggerated, as was likely, into an enormous mass of impossible height and unintelligible form, when the mountain itself for which the cloud had been mistaken, though subtending an angle of about eighteen or twenty degrees, instead of the fifty attributed to it, was of a form so exquisite that it might have been a lesson to Phidias. Nothing but failure can result from such methods of sketching, nor

* Compare Part III. sec. i. ch. ix. § 5.

[1] [For a further reference to the "typical" beauty of "the lines and gradations of unsullied snow," see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xii. § 1, where it is compared with the "vital" beauty of the flowers emerging from the snow. The two passages—"In the range . . . transmitted light," here, and the first portion of the section just referred to—are combined to form § 54 of *Frondes Agrestes*.]

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have I ever seen a single instance of an earnest study of snowy mountains by any one. Hence, wherever they are introduced, their drawing is utterly unintelligible, the forms being those of white rocks, or of rocks lightly powdered with snow, showing sufficiently that not only the painters have never studied the mountain carefully from below, but that they have never climbed into the snowy region. Harding's rendering of the high Alps (*vide* the engraving of Chamonix, and of the Wengern Alp, in the illustrations to Byron) is best; but even he shows no perception of the real anatomy. Turner invariably avoids the difficulty, though he has shown himself capable of grappling with it in the ice of the Liber Studiorum (Mer de Glace), which is very cold and slippery; but of the crusts and wreaths of the higher snow he has taken no cognizance. Even the vignettes to Rogers's Poems fail in this respect. It would be vain to attempt in this place to give any detailed account of the phenomena of the upper snows; but it may be well to note those general principles which every artist ought to keep in mind when he has to paint an Alp.

§ 20. *General principles of its forms on the Alps.*

Snow is modified by the under forms of the hill in some sort as dress is by the anatomy of the human frame. And as no dress can be well laid on without conceiving the body beneath, so no Alp can be drawn unless its under form is conceived first, and its snow laid on afterwards.

Every high Alp has as much snow upon it as it can carry.[1] It is not, observe, a mere coating of snow of given depth throughout, but it is snow loaded on until the rocks can hold no more. The surplus does not fall in the winter, because, fastened by continual frost, the quantity of snow which an Alp can carry is greater than each single winter can bestow;

[1] [Ruskin, as he explained thirty years later, was here following "the mathematical method of science as opposed to the artistic. Thinking of a thing, and demonstrating, —instead of looking at it. . . . If I had only *looked* at the snow carefully, I should have seen that it wasn't anywhere as thick as it could stand or lie—or, at least, as a hard substance, though deposited in powder, could stand." For his demonstration of the "great error" here made, see *Deucalion*, ch. iii. "Of Ice-Cream."]

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it falls in the first mild day of spring in enormous avalanches. Afterwards the melting continues, gradually removing from all the steep rocks the small quantity of snow which was all they could hold, and leaving them black and bare among the accumulated fields of unknown depth, which occupy the capacious valleys and less inclined superficies of the mountain.

Hence it follows that the deepest snow does not take, nor indicate, the actual forms of the rocks on which it lies, but it hangs from peak to peak in unbroken and sweeping festoons, or covers whole groups of peaks, which afford it sufficient hold, with vast and unbroken domes: these festoons and domes being guided in their curves, and modified in size, by the violent and prevalent direction of the winter winds.

We have, therefore, every variety of indication of the under mountain form: first the mere coating which is soon to be withdrawn, and which shows as a mere sprinkling or powdering, after a storm on the higher peaks; then the shallow incrustation on the steep sides, glazed by the running down of its frequent meltings, frozen again in the night; then the deeper snow, more or less cramped or modified by sudden eminences of emergent rock, or hanging in fractured festoons and huge blue irregular cliffs on the mountain flanks, and over the edges and summits of their precipices in nodding drifts, far overhanging, like a cornice (perilous things to approach the edge of, from above); finally, the pure accumulation of overwhelming depth, smooth, sweeping, and almost cleftless, and modified only by its lines of drifting. Countless phenomena of exquisite beauty belong to each of these conditions, not to speak of the transition of the snow into ice at lower levels; but all on which I shall at present insist is, that the artist should not think of his Alp merely as a white mountain, but conceive it as a group of peaks loaded with an accumulation of snow, and that especially he should avail himself of the exquisite curvatures, never failing, by which the snow unites and opposes the harsh and broken lines of the rock. I shall enter into farther detail on this subject

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hereafter;[1] at present it is useless to do so, as I have no examples to refer to, either in ancient or modern art. No statement of these facts has hitherto been made, nor any evidence given even of their observation, except by the most inferior painters.*

§ 21. Average paintings of Switzerland. Its real spirit has scarcely yet been caught.

Various works in green and white appear from time to time on the walls of the Academy, *like* the Alps indeed, but so frightfully like, that we shudder and sicken at the sight of them, as we do when our best friend shows us into his dining-room, to see a portrait of himself, which "everybody thinks very like." We should be glad to see fewer of these, for Switzerland is quite beyond the power of any but first-rate men, and is exceedingly bad practice for a rising artist: but let us express a hope that Alpine scenery will not continue to be neglected as it has been, by those who alone are capable of treating it. We love Italy, but we have had rather a surfeit of it lately; too many peaked caps and flat-headed pines. We should be very grateful to Harding and Stanfield if they would refresh us a little among the snow, and give us, what we believe them to be capable of giving us, a faithful expression of Alpine ideal. We are well aware of the pain inflicted on an artist's mind by the preponderance of black, and white, and green, over more available colours; but there is nevertheless, in generic Alpine scenery, a fountain of feeling yet unopened, a chord of harmony yet untouched by art. It will be struck by the first man who can separate what is national, in Switzerland, from what is ideal. We do not want châlets and three-legged stools, cow-bells and buttermilk. We want the pure and holy hills, treated as a link between heaven and earth.

* I hear of some study of Alpine scenery among the professors at Geneva; but all foreign landscape that I have ever met with has been so utterly ignorant that I hope for nothing except from our own painters.[2]

[1] [See *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. chs. xiv.–xviii.]

[2] [Perhaps an allusion to Alexandre Calame, of Geneva—a pioneer in the discovery of Switzerland for artistic purposes—whose Swiss views were at this time beginning to attract attention. There is a collection of his drawings at the Victoria and Albert (South Kensington) Museum.]

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CHAPTER III

OF THE INFERIOR MOUNTAINS

§ 1. The inferior mountains are distinguished from the central, by being divided into beds.

We have next to investigate the character of those intermediate masses which constitute the greater part of all hill scenery, forming the outworks of the high ranges, and being almost the sole constituents of such lower groups as those of Cumberland, Scotland, or South Italy.

All mountains whatsoever, not composed of the granite or gneiss rocks described in the preceding chapter, nor volcanic (these latter being comparatively rare), are composed of beds, not of homogeneous, heaped materials, but of accumulated layers, whether of rock or soil. It may be slate, sandstone, limestone, gravel, or clay; but whatever the substance, it is laid in layers, not in a mass. These layers are scarcely ever horizontal, and may slope to any degree, often occurring vertical, the boldness of the hill outline commonly depending in a great degree on their inclination. In consequence of this division into beds, every mountain will have two great sets of lines more or less prevailing in its contours: one indicative of the surfaces of the beds, where they come out from under each other; and the other indicative of the extremities or edges of the beds, where their continuity has been interrupted. And these two great sets of lines will commonly be at right angles to each other, or nearly so. If the surface of the bed approach a horizontal line, its termination will approach the vertical, and this is the most usual and ordinary way in which a precipice is produced.

Farther, in almost all rocks there is a third division of substance, which gives to their beds a tendency to split transversely in some directions rather than others, giving rise to

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what geologists call "joints," and throwing the whole rock into blocks more or less rhomboidal; so that the beds are not terminated by torn or ragged edges, but by faces comparatively smooth and even, usually inclined to each other at some definite angle. The whole arrangement may be tolerably represented by the bricks of a wall, whose tiers may be considered as strata, and whose sides and extremities will represent the joints by which those strata are divided, varying, however, their direction in different rocks, and in the same rock under differing circumstances.

§ 2. Farther division of these beds by joints,

Finally, in the slates, grauwackes,[1] and some calcareous beds, in the greater number, indeed, of *mountain* rocks, we find another most conspicuous feature of general structure, the lines of lamination, which divide the whole rock into an infinite number of delicate plates or layers, sometimes parallel to the direction or "strike" of the strata, oftener obliquely crossing it, and sometimes, apparently, altogether independent of it, maintaining a consistent and unvarying slope through a series of beds contorted and undulating in every conceivable direction. These lines of lamination extend their influence to the smallest fragment, causing it (as, for example, common roofing slate) to break smooth in one direction and with a ragged edge in another, and marking the faces of the beds and joints with distinct and numberless lines, commonly far more conspicuous in a near view than the larger and more important divisions.

§ 3. And by lines of lamination.

Now, it cannot be too carefully held in mind, in examining the principles of mountain structure, that nearly all the laws of nature with respect to external form are rather universal tendencies, evidenced by a plurality of instances, than imperative necessities complied with by all. For instance, it may be said to be a universal law with respect to the boughs of all trees, that they incline their extremities more to the ground in proportion as they are lower on the trunk, and that the

§ 4. Variety and seeming uncertainty under which these laws are manifested.

[1] [Grauwacke (or in Anglicized form, greywacke), "a conglomerate or grit rock consisting of rounded pebbles and sand firmly united together."]

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higher their point of insertion is, the more they share in the upward tendency of the trunk itself. But yet there is not a single group of boughs in any one tree which does not show exceptions to the rule, and present boughs lower in insertion, and yet steeper in inclination, than their neighbours. Nor is this defect or deformity, but the result of the constant habit of nature to carry variety into her very principles, and make the symmetry and beauty of her laws the more felt by the grace and accidentalism with which they are carried out. No one familiar with foliage could doubt for an instant of the necessity of giving evidence of this downward tendency in the boughs; but it would be nearly as great an offence against truth to make the law hold good with every individual branch, as not to exhibit its influence on the majority. Now, though the laws of mountain form are more rigid and constant than those of vegetation, they are subject to the same species of exception in carrying out. Though every mountain has these great tendencies in its lines, not one in a thousand of those lines is absolutely consistent with, and obedient to, this universal tendency. There are lines in every direction, and of almost every kind, but the sum and aggregate of those lines will invariably indicate the *universal* force and influence to which they are all subjected; and of these lines there will, I repeat, be two principal sets or classes, pretty nearly at right angles with each other. When both are inclined, they give rise to peaks or ridges; when one is nearly horizontal and the other vertical, to table-lands and precipices.

This then is the broad organization of all hills, modified afterwards by time and weather, concealed by superincumbent soil and vegetation, and ramified into minor and more delicate details in a way presently to be considered, but nevertheless universal in its great first influence, and giving to all mountains a particular cast and inclination; like the exertion of voluntary power in a definite direction, an internal spirit, manifesting itself in every crag, and breathing in every slope, flinging and forcing the mighty mass towards the heaven with an expression and an energy like that of life.

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Now, as in the case of the structure of the central peaks described above, so also here, if I had to give a clear idea of this organization of the lower hills, where it is seen in its greatest perfection, with a mere view to geological truth, I should not refer to any geological drawings, but I should take the Loch Coriskin of Turner.[1] It has been admirably engraved, and for all purposes of reasoning on form, is nearly as effective in the print as in the drawing. Looking at any group of the multitudinous lines which make up this mass of mountain, they appear to be running anywhere and everywhere; there are none parallel to each other, none resembling each other for a moment; yet the whole mass is felt at once to be composed with the most rigid parallelism, the surfaces of the beds towards the left, their edges or escarpments towards the right. In the centre, near the top of the ridge, the edge of a bed is beautifully defined, casting its shadow on the surface of the one beneath it; this shadow marking, by three jags, the chasms caused in the inferior one by three of its parallel joints. Every peak in the distance is evidently subject to the same great influence, and the evidence is completed by the flatness and evenness of the steep surfaces of the beds which rise out of the lake on the extreme right, parallel with those in the centre.

§ 5. The perfect expression of them in Turner's Loch Coriskin.

Turn to Glencoe,[2] in the same series (the Illustrations to Scott). We have, in the mass of mountain on the left, the most beautiful indication of vertical beds of a finely laminated rock, terminated by even joints towards the precipice: while the whole sweep of the landscape, as far as the most distant peaks, is evidently governed by one great and simple tendency upwards to the left, those most distant peaks themselves lying over one another in the same direction. In the Daphne hunting with Leucippus,[3] the mountains on the left descend in two precipices to the plain, each of which is formed by a vast escarpment of

§ 6. Glencoe, and other works;

[1] [In vol. x. of Scott's *Poetical Works*, engraved by Le Keux: *cf.* above, p. 402.]
[2] [*Cf.* above, pp. 414, 444.]
[3] [No. 520 in the National Gallery (oils); see above, p. 337 *n.*]

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the beds whose upper surfaces are shown between the two cliffs, sinking with an even slope from the summit of the lowest to the base of the highest, under which they evidently descend, being exposed in this manner for a length of five or six miles. The same structure is shown, though with more complicated development, on the left of the Loch Katrine.[1] But perhaps the finest instance, or at least the most marked of all, will be found in the exquisite Mount Lebanon, with the convent of St. Antonio, engraved in Finden's Bible. There is not one shade nor touch on the rock which is not indicative of the lines of stratification; and every fracture is marked with a straightforward simplicity which makes you feel that the artist has nothing in his heart but a keen love of the pure unmodified truth. There is no effort to disguise the repetition of forms, no apparent aim at artificial arrangement or scientific grouping; the rocks are laid one above another with unhesitating decision; every shade is understood in a moment, felt as a dark side, or a shadow, or a fissure, and you may step from one block or bed to another until you reach the mountain summit. And yet, though there seems no effort to disguise the repetition of forms, see how it *is* disguised, just as nature would have done it, by the perpetual play and changefulness of the very lines which appear so parallel; now bending a little up, or down, or losing themselves, or running into each other, the old story over and over again,—infinity. For here is still the great distinction between Turner's work and that of a common artist. Hundreds could have given the parallelism of blocks, but none but himself could have done so without the actual repetition of a single line or feature.

§ 7. *Especially the Mount Lebanon,*

Now compare with this the second mountain from the left in the picture of Salvator, No. 220 in the Dulwich Gallery.[2] The whole is first laid in with a very delicate and masterly grey, right in tone, agreeable in colour, quite unobjectionable

[1] [In vol. viii. of the *Poetical Works of Scott* (1834); "Mount Lebanon," in Finden's *Illustrations of the Bible.*]

[2] ["Mountainous Landscape, with a River," now ascribed to the school of Salvator Rosa; see above, p. 376, *n.* 2.]

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for a beginning. But how is this made into rock? On the light side Salvator gives us a multitude of touches, all exactly like one another, and therefore, it is to be hoped, quite patterns of perfection in rock drawing, since they are too good to be even varied. Every touch is a dash of the brush, as nearly as possible in the shape of a comma, round and bright at the top, convex on its right side, concave on its left, and melting off at the bottom into the grey. These are laid in confusion one above another, some paler, some brighter, some scarcely discernible, but all alike in shape. Now, I am not aware myself of any particular object, either in earth or heaven, which these said touches do at all resemble or portray. I do not, however, assert that they may not resemble something; feathers, perhaps; but I do say, and say with perfect confidence, that they may be Chinese for rocks, or Sanscrit for rocks, or symbolical of rocks in some mysterious and undeveloped character; but that they are no more *like* rocks than the brush that made them. The dark sides appear to embrace and overhang the lights; they cast no shadows, are broken by no fissures, and furnish, as food for contemplation, nothing but a series of concave curves.[1]

§ 8. *Compared with the work of Salvator,*

Yet if we go on to No. 269[2] we shall find something a great deal worse. I can believe Gaspar Poussin capable of committing as much sin against nature as most people; but I certainly do not suspect him of having had any hand in this thing, at least after he was ten years old. Nevertheless, it shows what he is supposed capable of by his admirers, and will serve for a broad illustration of all those absurdities which he himself in a less degree, and with feeling and thought to atone for them, perpetually commits. Take the white bit of rock on the opposite side of the river, just above the right arm of the Niobe, and tell me of what the

§ 9. *And of Poussin.*

[1] [For "series of concave curves. Yet if we go on," eds. 1 and 2 read:—
"series of concave curves, like those of a heap of broken plates and dishes, exhibiting on the whole as complete a piece of absurdity as ever human fingers disgraced themselves by producing.
"And yet not quite, neither, for if we go on . . ."]

[2] [Also in the Dulwich Gallery, now No. 213: "The Destruction of Niobe and her Children."]

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square green daubs of the brush at its base can be conjectured to be typical. There is no cast shadow,[1] no appearance of reflected light, of substance, or of character on the edge; nothing, in short, but pure staring green paint, scratched heavily on a white ground. Nor is there a touch in the picture more expressive. All are the mere dragging of the brush here and there and everywhere, without meaning or intention; winding, twisting, zigzagging, doing anything in fact which may serve to break up the light and destroy its breadth, without bestowing in return one hint or shadow of anything like form. This picture is, indeed, an extraordinary case, but the Salvator above mentioned is a characteristic and exceedingly favourable example of the usual mode of mountain drawing among the old landscape painters.* Their admirers may be challenged to bring forward a single instance of their

* I have above exhausted all terms of vituperation, and probably disgusted the reader; and yet I have not spoken with enough severity: I know not any terms of blame that are bitter enough to chastise justly the mountain drawing of Salvator in the pictures of the Pitti Palace.[2]

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[1] [Here, eds. 1–4 read, at greater length, as follows :—

"Rocks with pale-brown light sides, and rich green dark sides, are a phenomenon perhaps occurring in some of the improved passages of nature among our Cumberland lakes; where I remember once having seen a bed of roses, of peculiar magnificence, tastefully and artistically assisted in effect by the rocks above it being painted pink to match; but I do not think that they are a kind of thing which the clumsiness and false taste of nature can be supposed frequently to produce, even granting that these same sweeps of the brush could, by any exercise of imagination, be conceived representative of a dark, or any other side, which is far more than I am inclined to grant, seeing that there is no cast shadow . . ."]

[2] [This footnote was added in ed. 3. For some further "vituperation" of Salvator's pictures in the Pitti Palace, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xiv. § 29. In a letter to his father from Florence (June 8, 1845) Ruskin says :—

"I wasn't fit for anything else, so I sauntered into the Palazzo Pitti to look at the Salvators, which I was rather curious about. I was disappointed exceedingly as I walked through the rooms. After the frescoes I have been among, the pictures looked like rubbish, and most of them, thanks to the cleaners, I find are so. Nothing is left of Titian's 'Magdalen' but a lock or two of curly hair—and her box. But for Salvator, I was so thoroughly disgusted that I could hardly bring myself to stand before the pictures. I could not, by-the-bye, have come from a more unfortunate school for him [*i.e.* Angelico's frescoes]; but I never thought he was such a mindless charlatan, such a sanguinary ruffian; his battle pieces are fit for nothing but signs over a butcher's shop; it is pollution to look at them, and his two celebrated marines!! But you see if I don't give it him; I'll settle his hash for him this time."]

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expressing, or even appearing to have noted, the great laws of structure above explained. Their hills are, without exception, irregular earthy heaps, without energy or direction of any kind, marked with shapeless shadows and meaningless lines; sometimes, indeed, where great sublimity has been aimed at, approximating to the pure and exalted ideal of rocks, which, in the most artistical specimens of China cups and plates, we see suspended from aërial pagodas, or balanced upon peacocks' tails, but never warranting even the wildest theorist in the conjecture that their perpetrators had ever seen a mountain in their lives. Let us, however, look farther into the modifications of character by which nature conceals the regularity of her first plan; for although all mountains are organized as we have seen, their organization is always modified, and often nearly concealed, by changes wrought upon them by external influence.

§ 10. *Effects of external influence on mountain form.*

We ought, when speaking of their stratification, to have noticed another great law, which must, however, be understood with greater latitude of application than any of the others, as very far from imperative or constant in particular cases, though universal in its influence on the aggregate of all. It is that the lines by which rocks are terminated, are always steeper and more inclined to the vertical as we approach the summit of the mountain. Thousands of cases are to be found in every group, of rocks and lines horizontal at the top of the mountain and vertical at the bottom; but they are still the exceptions, and the average out of a given number of lines in any rock formation whatsoever will be found increasing in perpendicularity as they rise. Consequently the great skeleton lines of rock outline are always concave; that is to say, all distant ranges of rocky mountain approximate more or less to a series of concave curves, meeting in peaks, like a range of posts with chains hanging between. I do not say that convex forms will not perpetually occur, but that the tendency of the groups will always be to fall into sweeping curved valleys, with angular peaks; not rounded convex summits, with angular valleys.

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This structure is admirably exemplified in the second vignette in Rogers's Italy and in "Piacenza."[1]

§ 11. *The gentle convexity caused by aqueous erosion,*

But, although this is the primary form of all hills, and that which will always cut against the sky in every distant range, there are two great influences whose tendency is directly the reverse, and which modify, to a great degree, both the evidences of stratification and this external form. These are aqueous erosion and disintegration. The latter only is to be taken into consideration when we have to do with minor features of crag: but the former is a force in constant action, of the very utmost importance; a force to which one half of the great outlines of all mountains is entirely owing, and which has much influence upon every one of their details.

Now the tendency of aqueous action over a large elevated surface is *always* to make that surface symmetrically and evenly convex and dome-like, sloping gradually more and more as it descends, until it reaches an inclination of about 40°, at which slope it will descend perfectly straight to the valley; for at that slope the soil washed from above will accumulate upon the hill-side, as it cannot lie in steeper beds. This influence, then, is exercised more or less on all mountains, with greater or less effect in proportion as the rock is harder or softer, more or less liable to decomposition, more or less recent in date of elevation, and more or less characteristic in its original forms; but it universally induces, in the lower parts of mountains, a series of the most exquisitely symmetrical convex curves, terminating, as they descend to the valley, in uniform and uninterrupted slopes; this symmetrical structure being perpetually interrupted by cliffs and projecting masses, which give evidence of the interior parallelism of the mountain anatomy, but which interrupt the convex forms more frequently by rising out of them, than by indentation.

There remains but one fact more to be noticed. All mountains, in some degree, but especially those which are

[1] [The second vignette is at p. 8 of the *Italy*, "Tell's Chapel"; the drawing is No. 213 in the National Gallery. "Piacenza" is in vol. x. of Scott's *Prose Works*.]

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composed of soft or decomposing substance, are delicately and symmetrically furrowed by the descent of streams. The traces of their action commence at the very summits, fine as threads, and multitudinous, like the uppermost branches of a delicate tree. They unite in groups as they descend, concentrating gradually into dark undulating ravines, into which the body of the mountain descends on each side, at first in a convex curve, but at the bottom with the same uniform slope on each side which it assumes in its final descent to the plain, unless the rock be very hard, when the stream will cut itself a vertical chasm at the bottom of the curves, and there will be no even slope.* If, on the other hand, the rock be very soft, the slopes will increase rapidly in height and depth from day to day; washed away at the bottom and crumbling at the top, until, by their reaching the summit of the masses of rock which separate the active torrents, the whole mountain is divided into a series of pent-house-like ridges, all guiding to its summit, and becoming steeper and narrower as they ascend; these in their turn being divided by similar but smaller ravines, caused in the same manner, into the same kind of ridges; and these again by another series, the arrangement being carried finer and farther according to the softness of the rock. The south side of Saddleback,[1] in Cumberland, is a characteristic example; and the Montagne de Taconay, in Chamonix, a noble instance of one of these ridges or buttresses, with all its subdivisions, on a colossal scale.

§ 12. *And the effect of the action of torrents.*

* Some terrific cuts and chasms of this kind occur on the north side of the Valais, between Sion and Brieg. The torrent from the great Aletsch glacier descends through one of them. Elsewhere chasms may be found as narrow, but few so narrow and deep.[2]

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[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read, "Glaramara." Ruskin made the same confusion, between Glaramara and Saddleback (or Blencathra), in *Letters to a College Friend*, iii. § 1 (see Vol. I. p. 417 n.). For "Montagne de Taconay," eds. 1 and 2 read "Montagne du Coté"; ed. 3, "Montagne du Tacondy"; eds. 4 and 5, "Montagne de Taconas." The Montagne de la Côte divides the Glacier des Bossons from the Glacier de Taconnas; the Montagne de Taconnas is the next ridge; for the topography, see Fig. 22 in ch. xiii. of vol. iv. of *Modern Painters*.]

[2] [Footnote first added in ed. 3.]

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Now we wish to draw especial attention to the broad and bold simplicity of mass, and the excessive complication of details, which influences like these, acting on an enormous scale, must inevitably produce in all mountain groups: because each individual part and promontory, being compelled to assume the same symmetrical curves as its neighbours, and to descend at precisely the same slope to the valley, falls in with their prevailing lines, and becomes a part of a great and harmonious whole, instead of an unconnected and discordant individual. It is true that each of these members has its own touches of specific character, its own projecting crags, and peculiar hollows; but by far the greater portion of its lines will be such as unite with, though they do not repeat, those of its neighbours, and carry out the evidence of one great influence and spirit to the limits of the scene. This effort is farther aided by the original unity and connection of the rocks themselves, which, though it often may be violently interrupted, is never without evidence of its existence; for the very interruption itself forces the eye to feel that there is something to be interrupted, a sympathy and similarity of lines and fractures, which, however, full of variety and change of direction, never lose the appearance of symmetry of one kind or another. But, on the other hand, it is to be remembered that these great sympathizing masses are not one mountain, but a thousand mountains; that they are originally composed of a multitude of separate eminences, hewn and chiselled indeed into associating form, but each retaining still its marked points and features of character; that each of these individual members has, by the very process which assimilated it to the rest, been divided and subdivided into equally multitudinous groups of minor mountains; finally, that the whole complicated system is interrupted for ever and ever by daring manifestations of the inward mountain will, by the precipice which has submitted to no modulation of the torrent, and the peak which has bowed itself to no terror of the storm. Hence we see that the same imperative laws which require

§ 13. The exceeding simplicity of contour caused by these influences,

§ 14. And multiplicity of feature.

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perfect simplicity of mass, require infinite and termless complication of detail; that there will not be an inch nor a hair's-breadth of the gigantic heap which has not its touch of separate character, its own peculiar curve, stealing out for an instant and then melting into the common line; felt for a moment by the blue mist of the hollow beyond, then lost when it crosses the enlightened slope; that all this multiplicity will be grouped into larger divisions, each felt by its increasing aërial perspective, and its instants of individual form, these into larger, and these into larger still, until all are merged in the great impression and prevailing energy of the two or three vast dynasties which divide the kingdom of the scene.

§ 15. Both utterly neglected in ancient art.

There is no vestige nor shadow of approach to such treatment as this in the whole compass of ancient art. Whoever the master, his hills, wherever he has attempted them, have not the slightest trace of association or connection; they are separate, conflicting, confused, petty and paltry heaps of earth; there is no marking of distances or divisions in their body; they may have holes in them, but no valleys,—protuberances and excrescences, but no parts; and, in consequence, are invariably diminutive and contemptible in their whole appearance and impression.

§ 16. The fidelity of treatment in Turner's Daphne and Leucippus.

But look at the mass of mountain on the right in Turner's Daphne hunting with Leucippus.[1] It is simple, broad, and united as one surge of a swelling sea; it rises in an unbroken line along the valley, and lifts its promontories with an equal slope. But it contains in its body ten thousand hills. There is not a quarter of an inch of its surface without its suggestion of increasing distance and individual form. First, on the right, you have a range of tower-like precipices, the clinging wood climbing along their ledges and cresting their summits, white waterfalls gleaming through its leaves; not, as in

[1] [No. 520 in the National Gallery; see above, p. 337 *n.*, and in this chapter, p. 453.]

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Claude's scientific ideals, poured in vast torrents over the top, and carefully keeping all the way down on the most projecting parts of the sides; but stealing down, traced from point to point, through shadow after shadow, by their evanescent foam and flashing light,—here a wreath, and there a ray,—through the deep chasms and hollow ravines, out of which rise the soft rounded slopes of mightier mountain, surge beyond surge, immense and numberless, of delicate and gradual curve, accumulating in the sky until their garment of forest is exchanged for the shadowy fold of slumbrous morning cloud, above which the utmost silver peak shines islanded and alone. Put what mountain painting you will beside this, of any other artist, and its heights will look like mole-hills in comparison, because it will not have the unity and the multiplicity which are in nature, and with Turner, the signs of size.

§ 17. *And in the Avalanche and Inundation.*

Again, in the Avalanche and Inundation,[1] we have for the whole subject nothing but one vast bank of united mountain, and one stretch of uninterrupted valley. Though the bank is broken into promontory beyond promontory, peak above peak, each the abode of a new tempest, the arbiter of a separate desolation, divided from each other by the rushing of the snow, by the motion of the storm, by the thunder of the torrent; the mighty unison of their dark and lofty line, the brotherhood of ages, is preserved unbroken: and the broad valley at their feet, though measured league after league away by a thousand passages of sun and darkness, and marked with fate beyond fate of hamlet and of inhabitant, lies yet but as a straight and narrow channel, a filling furrow before the flood. Whose work will you compare with this? Salvator's grey heaps of earth, seven yards high, covered with bunchy brambles that we may be under no mistake about the size, thrown about at random in a little plain, beside a zigzagging river just wide

[1] ["Snowstorm: Avalanche and Inundation," exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1837, formerly in the Munro of Novar collection (see Thornbury's *Life of Turner*, ed. 1877, p. 104). For another reference to the picture, see above, p. 239.]

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enough to admit of the possibility of there being fish in it, and with banks just broad enough to allow the respectable angler or hermit to sit upon them conveniently in the foreground? Is there more of nature in such paltriness, think you, than in the valley and the mountain which bend to each other like the trough of the sea; with the flank of the one swept in one surge into the height of heaven, until the pine forests lie on its immensity like the shadows of narrow clouds, and the hollow of the other laid league by league into the blue of the air, until its white villages flash in the distance only like the fall of a sunbeam?

§ 18. The rarity among secondary hills of steep slopes or high precipices,

But let us examine by what management of the details themselves this wholeness and vastness of effect are given. We have just seen (§ 11) that it is impossible for the slope of a mountain, not actually a precipice of rock, to exceed 35° or 40°, and that by far the greater part of all hill-surface is composed of graceful curves of much less degree than this, reaching 40° only as their ultimate and utmost inclination. It must be farther observed that the interruptions to such curves, by precipices or steps, are always small in proportion to the slopes themselves. Precipices rising vertically more than 100 feet are very rare among the secondary hills of which we are speaking. I am not aware of any cliff in England or Wales where a plumb-line can swing clear for 200 feet; and even although sometimes, with intervals, breaks, and steps, we get perhaps 800 feet of a slope of 60° or 70°, yet not only are these cases very rare, but even these have little influence on the great contours of a mountain 4000 or 5000 feet in elevation, being commonly balanced by intervals of ascent not exceeding 6° or 8°. The result of which is, first, that the peaks and precipices of a mountain appear as little more than jags or steps emerging from its great curves; and, secondly, that the bases of all hills are enormously extensive as compared with their elevation, so that there must be always a horizontal distance between the observer and the summit five or six times exceeding the perpendicular one.

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§ 19. *And consequent expression of horizontal distance in their ascent.*

Now it is evident, that, whatever the actual angle of elevation of the mountain may be, every exhibition of this horizontal distance between us and the summit is an addition to its height, and of course to its impressiveness; while every endeavour to exhibit its slope as steep and sudden is diminution at once of its distance and elevation. In consequence, nature is constantly endeavouring to impress upon us this horizontal distance, which, even in spite of all her means of manifesting it, we are apt to forget or under-estimate; and all her noblest effects depend on the full measurement and feeling of it. And it is to the abundant and marvellous expression of it by Turner that I would direct especial attention, as being that which is in itself demonstrative of the highest knowledge and power; knowledge, in the constant use of lines of subdued slope in preference to steep or violent ascents, and in the perfect subjection of all such features, when they necessarily occur, to the larger masses; and power, in the inimitable statements of retiring space by mere painting of surface details, without the aid of crossing shadows, divided forms, or any other artifice.

§ 20. *Full statement of all these facts in various works of Turner,—Caudebec, etc.*

The Caudebec,[1] in the Rivers of France, is a fine instance of almost every fact which we have been pointing out. We have in it, first, the clear expression of what takes place constantly among hills; that the river, as it passes through the valley, will fall backwards and forwards from side to side, lying first, if I may so speak, with all its weight against the hills on the one side, and then against those on the other; so that, as here it is exquisitely told, in each of its circular sweeps the whole force of its current is brought deep and close to the bases of the hills, while the water on the side next the plain is shallow, deepening gradually. In consequence of this, the hills are cut away at their bases by the current, so that their slopes are interrupted by precipices mouldering to the water.

[1] [Plate 10 in *The Seine and the Loire;* the drawing is No. 129 in the National Gallery.]

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Observe, first, how nobly Turner has given us the perfect unity of the whole mass of hill, making us understand that every ravine in it has been cut gradually by streams. The first eminence, beyond the city, is not disjointed from, nor independent of, the one succeeding, but evidently part of the same whole, originally united, separated only by the action of the stream between. The association of the second and third is still more clearly told, for we see that there has been a little longitudinal valley running along the brow of their former united mass, which, after the ravine had been cut between, formed the two jags which Turner has given us at the same point in each of their curves. This great triple group has, however, been originally distinct from those beyond it; for we see that these latter are only the termination of the enormous even slope, which appears again on the extreme right, having been interrupted by the rise of the near hills. Observe how the descent of the whole series is kept gentle and subdued, never suffered to become steep except where it has been cut away by the river, the sudden precipice caused by which is exquisitely marked in the last two promontories, where they are defined against the bright horizon; and, finally, observe how, in the ascent of the nearest eminence beyond the city, without one cast shadow or any division of distances, every yard of surface is felt to be retiring by the mere painting of its details, how we are permitted to walk up it, and along its top, and are carried, before we are half-way up, a league or two forward into the picture. The difficulty of doing this, however, can scarcely be appreciated except by an artist.

§ 21. *The use of considering geological truths.*

I do not mean to assert that this great painter is acquainted with the geological laws and facts he has thus illustrated;[1] I am not aware whether he be or not; I merely wish to demonstrate, in points admitting of demonstration, that intense observation of, and strict adherence to, truth, which it is impossible to demonstrate in its less tangible and more delicate manifestations. However

[1] [See above, p. 429 *n.*]

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I may *feel* the truth of every touch and line, I cannot *prove* truth, except in large and general features; and I leave it to the arbitration of every man's reason, whether it be not likely that the painter who is thus so rigidly faithful in great things that every one of his pictures might be the illustration of a lecture on the physical sciences, is not likely to be faithful also in small.

§ 22. *Expression of retiring surface by Turner contrasted with the work of Claude.*

Honfleur, and the scene between Clairmont and Mauves,[1] supply us with farther instances of the same grand simplicity of treatment; and the latter is especially remarkable for its expression of the furrowing of the hills by descending water, in the complete roundness and symmetry of their curves and in the delicate and sharp shadows which are cast in the undulating ravines. It is interesting to compare with either of these noble works such hills as those of Claude, on the left of the picture marked 260 in the Dulwich Gallery.[2] There is no detail nor surface in one of them; not an inch of ground for us to stand upon; we must either sit astride upon the edge, or fall to the bottom.[3] I could not point to a more complete instance of mountain calumniation; nor can I oppose it more

[1] [Plates 20 and 56 in *The Seine and the Loire*. The drawing of "Honfleur" is No. 159 in the National Gallery; that of "Between Clairmont and Mauves," No. 18 in the collection presented by Ruskin to the Oxford University Galleries.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 here proceed :—

"We have here a mass of mountain intended to retire from us, but the clumsy workman, not being able to indicate this achievement upon their surfaces, is compelled to have recourse to the usual tyro's expedient of drawing edge behind edge, like the scenes of a theatre, and these same unlucky edges only multiply the exhibition of his weakness, for having evidently no power of indicating roundness or solidity in any of them, he has trusted entirely, like an awkward schoolboy, to making the outline hard and bright, and shading the body of each gradually as it comes down, which is so far from accomplishing his purpose that it has made the edges, if anything, rather nearer than any other part of the hills, and instead of promontories we have pasteboard scenes. There is no detail," etc.

No. 260 in the Dulwich Gallery, however, is not by Claude, but by N. Poussin (or his school). Ruskin probably meant to refer to No. 264 (now No. 53), a picture now ascribed to the school of Claude.]

[3] [Eds. 1 and 2 here proceed :—

"Now there is no doubt nor capability of dispute about such painting as this; it is the work of a mere tyro, and a weak and childish tyro, ignorant of the common laws of light and shadow; it is what beginners always do, and always have done, but what, if they have either sense or feeling, they soon cease to do. I could not point," etc.]

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completely, in every circumstance, than with the Honfleur of Turner, already mentioned; in which there is not one edge or division admitted, and yet we are permitted to climb up the hill from the town, and pass far into the mist along its top, and so descend mile after mile along the ridge to seaward, until without one break in the magnificent unity of progress, we are carried down to the utmost horizon. And contrast the brown paint of Claude, which you can only guess to be meant for rock or soil because it *is* brown, with Turner's profuse, pauseless richness of feature, carried through all the enormous space; the unmeasured wealth of exquisite detail, over which the mind can dwell, and walk, and wander, and feast for ever, without finding either one break in its vast simplicity, or one vacuity in its exhaustless splendour.

§ 23. The same moderation of slope in the contours of his higher hills.

But these, and hundreds of others, which it is sin not to dwell upon, wooded hills and undulating moors of North England, rolling surges of park and forest of the South, soft and vine-clad ranges of French coteaux casting their oblique shadows on silver leagues of glancing rivers, and olive-whitened promontories of Alp and Apennine, are only instances of Turner's management of the lower and softer hills. In the bolder examples of his powers, where he is dealing with lifted masses of enormous mountain, we shall still find him as cautious in his use of violent slopes or vertical lines, and still as studied in his expression of retiring surface. We never get to the top of one of his hills without being tired with our walk; not by the steepness, observe, but by the stretch; for we are carried up towards the heaven by such delicate gradation of line, that we scarcely feel that we have left the earth before we find ourselves among the clouds. The Skiddaw, in the Illustrations to Scott, is a noble instance of this majestic moderation. The mountain lies in the morning light, like a level vapour; its gentle lines of ascent are scarcely felt by the eye; it rises without effort or exertion, by the mightiness of its mass; every slope is full of slumber; and we know not how it has been exalted, until we find it laid as a floor for the walking

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of the eastern clouds. So again in the Fort Augustus,[1] where the whole elevation of the hills depends on the soft lines of swelling surface which undulate back through leagues of mist, carrying us unawares higher and higher above the diminished lake, until, when we are all but exhausted with the endless distance, the mountains make their last spring, and bear us, in that instant of exertion, half-way to heaven.

§ 24. The peculiar difficulty of investigating the more essential truths of hill outline.

I ought perhaps rather to have selected, as instances of mountain form, such elaborate works as the Oberwesel or Lake of Uri,[2] but I have before expressed my dislike of speaking of such magnificent pictures as these by parts. And indeed all proper consideration of the hill drawing of Turner must be deferred until we are capable of testing it by the principles of beauty; for, after all, the most essential qualities of line, those on which all right delineation of mountain character must depend, are those which are only to be explained or illustrated by appeals to our feeling of what is beautiful. There is an expression about all the hill lines of nature, which I think I shall be able hereafter to explain; but it is not to be reduced to line and rule, not to be measured by angles or described by compasses, not to be chipped out by the geologist or equated by the mathematician. It is intangible, incalculable; a thing to be felt, not understood; to be loved, not comprehended; a music of the eyes, a melody of the heart, whose truth is known only by its sweetness.[3]

I can scarcely, without repeating myself to tediousness,

[1] [Illustration in vol. xxvi. of Scott's *Prose Works*. "Skiddaw" is in vol. ix. of the *Poetical Works*.]

[2] [Oberwesel was a drawing in the Windus collection; for other references to it see pp. 250 *n.*, 412 *n.*, 552 *n.* The Lake of Uri was engraved as a companion plate to "The Lake of Nemi," and published with it; the drawing is in the collection of Mr. E. Steinkopff, of Berkeley Square.]

[3] [Eds. 1 and 2 conclude this paragraph as follows:—

"It will only be when we can feel as well as think, and rejoice as well as reason, that I shall be able to lead you with Turner to his favourite haunts,—to bid you walk with him along slopes of the waving hills, with their rich woods bending on their undulations like the plumage on a bird's bosom, and up the hollow paths of silent valleys, and along the rugged flanks of heaving mountains, passing like a cloud from crag to crag, and chasm to chasm, and solitude to solitude, among lifted walls of living rock, mighty surges of

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enter at present into proper consideration of the mountain drawing of other modern painters. We have, fortunately, several by whom the noble truths which we have seen so fully exemplified by Turner are also deeply felt and faithfully rendered; though, for the perfect statement of them, there is a necessity of such a union of freedom of thought with perfect mastery over the greatest mechanical difficulties, as we can scarcely hope to see attained by more than one man in our age. Very nearly the same words which we used in reference to Stanfield's drawings of the central clouds,[1] might be applied to his rendering of mountain truth. He occupies exactly the same position with respect to other artists in earth as in cloud. None can be said really to *draw* the mountain as he will, to have so perfect a mastery over its organic development; but there is, nevertheless, in all his works, some want of feeling and individuality. He has studied and mastered his subject to the bottom, but he trusts too much to that past study, and rather invents his hills from his possessed stores of knowledge, than expresses in them the fresh ideas received from nature. Hence, in all that he does, we feel a little too much that the hills are his own. We cannot swear to their being the particular crags and individual promontories which break the cone of Ischia, or shadow the waves of Maggiore. We are nearly sure, on the contrary, that nothing but the outline is local, and that all the filling up has been done in the study. Now, we have already shown (Sec. I. Chap. III.) that particular truths are more important than general ones, and this is just one of the cases in which that rule especially applies. Nothing is so great a sign of truth and beauty in mountain drawing, as the appearance of individuality; nothing

§ 25. Works of other modern artists,—Clarkson Stanfield.

§ 26. Importance of particular and individual truth in hill drawing.

tempestuous earth, dim domes of heaven-girded snow, where the morning first strikes, and the sunset last lingers, and the stars pause in their setting, and the tempest and the lightning have their habitations, to bid you behold in all that perfect beauty,—which is known only to love,—that truth infinite and divine, which is revealed only to devotion.

"I can scarcely," etc.]

[1] [See above, p. 390.]

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is so great a proof of real imagination and invention, as the appearance that nothing has been imagined or invented. We ought to feel of every inch of mountain, that it *must* have existence in reality, that if we had lived near the place we should have known every crag of it, and that there must be people to whom every crevice and shadow of the picture is fraught with recollections, and coloured with associations. The moment the artist can make us feel this, the moment he can make us think that *he* has done nothing, that nature has done all, that moment he becomes ennobled, he proves himself great. As long as we remember him, we cannot respect him. We honour him most when we most forget him. He becomes great when he becomes invisible. And we may, perhaps, be permitted to express our hope that Mr. Stanfield will, our conviction that he must, if he would advance in his rank as an artist, attend more to local character, and give us generally less of the Stanfield limestone. He ought to study with greater attention the rocks which afford finer divisions and more delicate parts (slates and gneiss); and he ought to observe more fondly and faithfully those beautiful laws and lines of swell and curvature, by intervals of which nature sets off and relieves the energy of her peaked outlines. He is at present apt to be too rugged, and, in consequence, to lose size. Of his best manner of drawing hills, I believe I can scarcely give a better example than the rocks of Suli, engraved in Finden's illustrations to Byron. It is very grand and perfect in all parts and points.

Copley Fielding is peculiarly graceful and affectionate in his drawing of the inferior mountains. But as with his clouds, so with his hills; as long as he keeps[1] to silvery films of misty outline, or purple shadows mingled with the evening light, he is true and beautiful; but the moment he withdraws

[1] [For "Copley Fielding . . . as long as he keeps," eds. 1 and 2 read :—
"Copley Fielding is our next greatest artist in the drawing of the inferior mountains. His mountain *feeling* is quite perfect; nothing can be more delicate than his perception of what is graceful in the outline, or of what is valuable in the tenderness of aërial tone. But, again, as with his clouds, so with his hills; it is all feeling, and no drawing. As long as he keeps . . ."]

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the mass out of his veiling mystery, he is lost. His worst drawings, therefore, are those on which he has spent most time; for he is sure to show weakness wherever he gives detail. We believe that all his errors proceed, as we observed before,[1] from his not working with the chalk or pencil; and that if he would paint half the number of pictures in the year which he usually produces, and spend his spare time in hard dry study of forms, the half he painted would be soon worth double the present value of all. For he really has deep and genuine feeling of hill character, a far higher perception of space, elevation, incorporeal colour, and all those qualities which are the poetry of mountains, than any other of our water-colour painters; and it is an infinite pity that he should not give to these delicate feelings the power of realization, which might be attained by a little labour. A few thorough studies of his favourite mountains, Ben Venue or Ben Cruachan, in clear, strong, front chiaroscuro, allowing himself neither colour nor mist, nor any means of getting over the ground but downright drawing, would, we think, open his eyes to sources of beauty of which he now takes no cognizance. He ought not, however, to repeat the same subjects so frequently, as the casting about of the mind for means of varying them blunts the feelings to truth. And he should remember that an artist who is not making progress is nearly certain to be retrograding; and that progress is not to be made by working in the study, or by mere labour bestowed on the repetition of unchanging conceptions.

§ 27. Works of Copley Fielding. His high feeling.

J. D. Harding would paint mountains very nobly, if he made them of more importance in his compositions, but they are usually little more than backgrounds for his foliage or buildings; and it is his present system to make his backgrounds very slight. Some of the best and most substantial renderings of the green and turfy masses of our lower hills are to be found

§ 28. Works of J. D. Harding and others.

[1] [Above, p. 399.]

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in the drawings of Blacklock;[1] and I am sorry not to have before noticed the quiet and simple earnestness, and the tender feeling, of the mountain drawings of William Turner of Oxford.*

* It is not without indignation that I see the drawings of this patient and unassuming master deliberately insulted every year by the Old Water-Colour Society, and placed in consistent degradation at the top of the room, while the commonest affectations and trickeries of vulgar draughtsmanship are constantly hung on the line. Except the works of Hunt, Prout, Cox, Fielding, and Finch, there are generally none in the room which deserve so honourable a place as those of William Turner.[2]

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[1] [W. J. Blacklock (1816–1858) exhibited for some years pictures and drawings of scenery in the North of England.]

[2] [The end of the chapter, from "Some of the best . . . William Turner of Oxford," including the footnote, was not in eds. 1–4, where the chapter ended thus:—

> "very slight. His colour is very beautiful; indeed both his and Fielding's are far, far more refined than Stanfield's. We wish he would oftener take up some wild subject, dependent for interest on its mountain forms alone, as we should anticipate the highest results from his perfect drawing; and we think that such an exercise, occasionally gone completely through, would counteract a tendency which we perceive in his present distances, to become a little thin and cutting, if not incomplete.
>
> "[Callcott's work, when he takes up a piece of hill scenery, is very perfect in all but colour.] The late G. Robson was a man most thoroughly acquainted with all the characteristics of our own island hills; and some of the outlines of John Varley showed very grand feeling of energy of form."

Eds. 3 and 4 omit the bracketed words.

William Turner, commonly called "of Oxford," to distinguish him from the great Turner, was a drawing-master in that city, and an exhibitor of water-colours during a long artistic career (b. 1789, d. 1862). For other references to him, see *Academy Notes*, 1856 (O.W.C.S. 1, 4), 1858 (O.W.C.S. 62), 1859 ("Water-Colour Societies"). Francis Oliver Finch (1802–1862), landscape-painter, had studied under Varley; he was a member of the Old Water-Colour Society. Several of his drawings are in the Victoria and Albert (South Kensington) Museum. For references to Robson, see above, p. 193 *n.*; to Varley, p. 275 *n.*]

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CHAPTER IV

OF THE FOREGROUND

We have now only to observe the close characteristics of the rocks and soils to which the large masses of which we have been speaking owe their ultimate characters.

§ 1. *What rocks were the chief components of ancient landscape foreground.*

We have already seen that there exists a marked distinction between those stratified rocks whose beds are amorphous and without subdivision, as many limestones and sandstones, and those which are divided by lines of lamination, as all slates. The last kind of rock is the more frequent in nature, and forms the greater part of all hill scenery. It has, however, been successfully grappled with by few, even of the moderns, except Turner; while there is no single example of any aim at it or thought of it among the ancients, whose foregrounds, as far as it is possible to guess at their intention through their concentrated errors, are chosen from among the tufa and travertin of the lower Apennines (the ugliest as well as the least characteristic rocks of nature), and whose larger features of rock scenery, if we look at them with a predetermination to find in them a resemblance of *something*, may be pronounced at least liker the mountain limestone than anything else. I shall glance, therefore, at the general characters of these materials first, in order that we may be able to appreciate the fidelity of rock-drawing on which Salvator's reputation has been built.

The massive limestones separate generally into irregular blocks, tending to the form of cubes or parallelopipeds, and terminated by tolerably smooth planes. The weather, acting on the edges of these blocks, rounds them off; but the frost,

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which, while it cannot penetrate nor split the body of the stone, acts energetically on the angles, splits off the rounded fragments, and supplies sharp, fresh, and complicated edges. Hence the angles of such blocks are usually marked by a series of steps and fractures, in which the peculiar character of the rock is most distinctly seen; the effect being increased in many limestones by the interposition of two or three thinner beds between the large strata of which the block has been a part; these thin laminæ breaking easily, and supplying a number of fissures and lines at the edge of the detached mass. Thus, as a general principle, if a rock have character anywhere, it would be on the angle; and however even and smooth its great planes may be, it will usually break into variety where it turns a corner. In one of the most exquisite pieces of rock truth ever put on canvas, the foreground of the "Napoleon" in the Academy, 1842,[1] this principle was beautifully exemplified in the complicated fractures of the upper angle just where it turned from the light, while the planes of the rock were varied only by the modulation they owed to the waves. It follows from this structure that the edges of all rock being partially truncated, first by large fractures, and then by the rounding of the fine edges of these by the weather, perpetually present *convex* transitions from the light to the dark side, the planes of the rock almost always swelling a little *from* the angle.

§ 2. Salvator's limestones. The real characters of the rock. Its fractures, and obtuseness of angles.

Now it will be found throughout the works of Salvator, that his most usual practice was to give a *concave* sweep of the brush for his first expression of the dark side, leaving the paint darkest towards the light; by which daring and original method of procedure he has succeeded in covering his foregrounds with forms which approximate to those of drapery, of ribands, of crushed cocked hats, of locks of hair, of waves, leaves, or anything, in short, flexible or tough, but which of course are not

§ 3. Salvator's acute angles caused by the meeting of concave curves.

[1] ["War: the Exile and the Rock-Limpet," No. 235 in the National Gallery. For list of other references to it, see above, p. 273 *n*.]

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only unlike, but directly contrary to, the forms which nature has impressed on rocks.* And the circular and sweeping strokes or stains which are dashed at random over their surfaces, only fail of destroying all resemblance whatever to rock structure from their frequent want of any meaning at all, and from the impossibility of our supposing any of them to be representative of shade. Now, if there be any part of landscape in which nature develops her principles of light and shade more clearly than another, it is rock; for the dark sides of fractured stone receive brilliant reflexes from the lighted surfaces, on which the shadows are marked with the most exquisite precision, especially because, owing to the parallelism of cleavage,

§ 4. *Peculiar distinctness of light and shade in the rocks of nature.*

* I have cut out a passage in this place[1] which insisted on the *angular* character of rocks; not because it was false, but because it was incomplete, and I cannot explain it nor complete it without example. It is not the absence of curves, but the suggestion of *hardness through* curves, and of the under tendencies of the structure, which is the true characteristic of rock form; and Salvator, whom neither here nor elsewhere I have abused enough, is not wrong because he paints curved rocks, but because his curves are the curves of ribands and not of rocks. The difference between rock curvature and other curvature I cannot explain verbally, but I hope to do it hereafter by illustration;[2] at present, let the reader study the rock-drawing of the Mont St. Gothard subject, in the Liber Studiorum,[3] and compare it with any examples of Salvator to which he may happen to have access. The account of rocks here given is altogether inadequate, and I only do not add to it because I first wish to give longer study to the subject.

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[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 contain the afterwards omitted passage referred to in the footnote (first added in ed. 3) as follows:—

"Again, the grand outlines of rocks are all angular. Water-worn and rounded they may be, or modulated on the surface, as we shall presently see, but their prevailing lines and shadows are still rectilinear. In the 'Napoleon'—I can illustrate by no better example, for I can reason as well from this as I could with my foot on the native rock—the great outlines of the foreground are all straight, firm, and decided; its planes nearly level, though touched with tender modulations by the washing of the waves, and the complicated fracture above spoken of, though its edges are entirely rounded off, retains all the character of the right lines of which it was originally composed. But I think it would be difficult to show any strokes of the brush on any rock painted by the old masters, by Salvator especially, not curvilinear. And the circular," etc.]

§ 4. *The true outlines are all angular.*

§ 5. *Salvator's are all curved.*

[2] [See vol. iv. of *Modern Painters*, ch. xii.]

[3] [The drawing is No. 477 in the National Gallery; for other references to it, see *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. ii. § 16, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi. § 30 *n*.]

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the surfaces lie usually in directions nearly parallel. Hence every crack and fissure has its shadow and reflected light separated with the most delicious distinctness, and the organization and solid form of all parts are told with a decision of language, which, to be followed with anything like fidelity, requires the most transparent colour, and the most delicate and scientific drawing. So far are the works of the old landscape painters from rendering this, that it is exceedingly rare to find a single passage in which the shadow can even be distinguished from the dark side—they scarcely seem to know the one to be darker than the other; and the strokes of the brush are not used to explain or express a form known or conceived, but are dashed and daubed about without any aim beyond the covering of the canvas. "A rock," the old masters appear to say to themselves, "is a great, irregular, formless, characterless lump; but it must have shade upon it, and any grey marks will do for that shade."

§ 5. Peculiar confusion of both in the rocks of Salvator.

Finally, while few, if any, of the rocks of nature are untraversed by delicate and slender fissures, whose black sharp lines are the only means by which the peculiar quality in which rocks most differ from the other objects of the landscape, brittleness, can be effectually suggested, we look in vain among the blots and stains with which the rocks of ancient art are loaded, for any vestige or appearance of fissure or splintering. Toughness and malleability appear to be the qualities whose expression is most aimed at; sometimes sponginess, softness, flexibility, tenuity, and occasionally transparency. Take, for instance, the foreground of Salvator, in No. 220 of the Dulwich Gallery.[1] There is, on the right-hand side of it, an object which I never walk through the room without contemplating for a minute or two with renewed solicitude and anxiety of mind, indulging in a series of very wild and imaginative conjectures as to its probable or

§ 6. And total want of any expression of hardness or brittleness.

§ 7. Instances in particular pictures.

[1] ["Mountainous Landscape, with a River" (school of S. Rosa); see above, pp. 376, n. 2; 387, 454.]

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possible meaning. I think there is reason to suppose that the artist intended it either for a very large stone, or for the trunk of a tree; but any decision as to its being either one or the other of these must, I conceive, be the extreme of rashness. It melts into the ground on one side, and might reasonably be conjectured to form a part of it, having no trace of woody structure or colour; but on the other side it presents a series of concave curves, interrupted by cogs like those of a water-wheel, which the boldest theorist would certainly not feel himself warranted in supposing symbolical of rock.[1] The forms which this substance, whatever it be, assumes, will be found repeated, though in a less degree, in the foreground of No. 159,[2] where they are evidently meant for rock.

§ 8. *Compared with the works of Stanfield.*

Let us contrast with this system of rock-drawing the faithful, scientific, and dexterous studies of nature which we find in the works of Clarkson Stanfield. He is a man especially to be opposed to the old masters, because he usually confines himself to the same rock subjects as they, the mouldering and furrowed crags of the secondary formation, which arrange themselves more or less into broad and simple masses; and in the rendering of these it is impossible to go beyond him. Nothing can surpass his care, his firmness, or his success, in marking the distinct and sharp light and shade by which the form is explained, never confusing it with local colour, however richly his surface texture may be given; while the wonderful play of line with which he will vary, and through which he will indicate, the regularity of stratification, is almost as instructive as that of nature herself. I cannot point to any of his works as better

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 here read to the end of the paragraph as follows:—
"symbolical of rock. I should be glad of other opinions on the subject; but, on the whole, I believe that much more is to be said against it botanically than geologically, and that the hypothesis most favourable to Salvator would furnish us, in this piece of drawing, with one of the finest examples existing of concentrated geological falsehood. The forms . . . meant for rock; not to speak of the blocks on the other side of the river in the same picture, whose shapeless, daubed, shadowless concavities are to the full as offensive and absurd, though not quite so ambiguous."]

[2] [Now No. 137, "A Pool with Friars Fishing." For other references to this picture, see above, pp. 375, 406.]

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or more characteristic than others;[1] but among small and easily accessible engravings, the Botallack Mine, Cornwall, engraved in the Coast Scenery,[2] gives us a very finished and generic representation of rock, whose primal organization has been violently affected by external influences. We have the stratification and cleavage indicated at its base, every fissure being sharp, angular, and decisive, disguised gradually as it rises by the rounding of the surface, and the successive furrows caused by the descent of streams. But the exquisite drawing of the foreground is especially worthy of notice. No huge concave sweeps of the brush, no daubing or splashing here. Every inch of it is brittle and splintery, and the fissures are explained to the eye by the most perfect, speaking light and shade; we can stumble over the edges of them. The East Cliff, Hastings, is another very fine example, from the exquisite irregularity with which its squareness of general structure is varied and disguised. Observe how totally contrary every one of its lines is to the absurdities of Salvator. Stanfield's are all angular and straight, every apparent curve made up of right lines, while Salvator's are all sweeping and flourishing like so much penmanship. Stanfield's lines pass away into delicate splintery fissures, Salvator's are broad daubs throughout. Not one of Stanfield's lines is like another. Every one of Salvator's mocks all the rest. All Stanfield's curves, where his universal angular character is massed, as on the left-hand side, into large sweeping forms, are convex. Salvator's are every one concave.

§ 9. *Their absolute opposition in every particular.*

The foregrounds of J. D. Harding, and the rocks of his

[1] [Eds. 1–4 read:—

"characteristic than others; [for he is a man who never fails, and who is constantly presenting us with more highly wrought example of rock truth]; but his 'Ischia,' in the present British Institution, may be taken as a fair average example. The 'Bottallack Mine, Cornwall,'" etc.

Eds. 3 and 4 omit the bracketed words. Stanfield's picture in the British Institution's Exhibition of 1843 was No. 120, "View of the islands of Ischia and Procida from the rocks called 'Le Schiave.'"]

[2] [*Stanfield's Coast Scenery: a Series of Views in the British Channel*, 1836. "Botallack Mine" (engraved by W. Miller) is Plate 8; the "East Cliff, Hastings" (engraved by J. Stephenson), Plate 27.]

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middle distances, are also thoroughly admirable. He is not quite so various and undulating in his line as Stanfield; and sometimes, in his middle distances, is wanting in solidity, owing to a little confusion of the dark side and shadow with each other, or with the local colour: but his work, in near passages of fresh-broken sharp-edged rock, is absolute perfection, excelling Stanfield in the perfect freedom and facility with which his fragments are splintered and scattered; true in every line without the least apparent effort. Stanfield's best works are laborious; but Harding's rocks fall from under his hand as if they had just crashed down the hill-side, flying on the instant into lovely form. In colour, also, he incomparably surpasses Stanfield, who is apt to verge upon mud, or be cold in his grey. The rich, lichenous, and changeful warmth, and delicate weathered greys of Harding's rock, illustrated as they are by the most fearless, firm, and unerring drawing, render his wild pieces of torrent shore the finest things, next to the work of Turner, in English foreground art.

§ 10. *The rocks of J. D. Harding.*

J. B. Pyne has very accurate knowledge of limestone rock, and expresses it clearly and forcibly; but it is much to be regretted[1] that this clever artist appears to be losing all sense of colour, and is getting more and more mannered in execution, evidently never studying from nature except with the previous determination to Pynize everything.*

* A passage which I happened to see in an essay of Mr. Pyne's,[2] in the Art-Union, about nature's "foisting rubbish" upon the artist, sufficiently explains the cause of this decline. If Mr. Pyne will go to nature, as all great men have done, and as all men who mean to be great must do, that is not

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 omit the passage, "but it is much to be regretted . . . everything," and the footnote, reading instead :—

"forcibly, especially in oils, where his decision of execution is very remarkable. And, indeed, there are few of our landscape painters, who though they may not possess the intimate and scientific geological knowledge of Stanfield and Harding, are not incomparably superior in every quality of drawing to every one of the old masters, though, as it is paying them but a poor compliment to say that they do not contradict nature in every particular, I should rather say, who are not intelligent, truthful, and right in all their work, as far as it goes."]

[2] [For some later criticism of James Baker Pyne (1800–1870), see *Academy Notes*, 1858 (*s.* "Society of British Artists," No. 84). Pyne contributed a series of papers

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§ 11. *Characters of loose earth and soil.*

Before passing to Turner, let us take one more glance at the foregrounds of the old masters, with reference, not to their management of rock, which is comparatively a rare component part of their foregrounds, but to the common soil which they were obliged to paint constantly, and whose forms and appearances are the same all over the world. A steep bank of loose earth of any kind, that has been at all exposed to the weather, contains in it, though it may not be three feet high, features capable of giving high gratification to a careful observer. It is almost a facsimile of a mountain slope of soft and decomposing rock; it possesses nearly as much variety of character, and is governed by laws of organization no less rigid. It is furrowed in the first place by undulating lines, caused by the descent of the rain; little ravines, which are cut precisely at the same slope as those of the mountain, and leave ridges scarcely less graceful in their contour, and beautifully sharp in their chiselling. Where a harder knot of ground or a stone occurs, the earth is washed from beneath it, and accumulates above it, and there we have a little precipice connected by a sweeping curve at its summit with the great slope, and casting a sharp dark shadow; where the soil has been soft, it will probably be washed away underneath until it gives way, and leaves a

§ 12. *Its exceeding grace and fulness of feature.*

merely to be *helped*, but to be *taught* by her; he will most assuredly find—and I say this in no unkind or depreciatory feeling, for I should say the same of all artists who are in the habit of only sketching nature, and not studying her—that *her* worst is better than *his* best. I am quite sure that if Mr. Pyne, or any other painter who has hitherto been very careful in his choice of subject, will go into the next turnpike road, and taking the first four trees that he comes to in the hedge, give them a day each, drawing them leaf for leaf, as far as may be, and even their smallest boughs with as much care as if they were rivers, or an important map of a newly surveyed country, he will find, when he has brought them all home, that any one of them is better than the best he ever invented.[1] Compare Part III. sec. i. chap. iii. §§ 12, 13.

to the *Art Union Monthly Journal* during the years 1843–45. They were entitled "The Nomenclature of Pictorial Art." In his references to landscape he took Claude as the supreme model, and dwelt on the necessity of improving upon nature.]

[1] [Ruskin is here preaching what he had himself experienced in practice. See above, Introduction, pp. xxi.–xxii.]

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jagged, hanging, irregular line of fracture: and all these circumstances are explained to the eye in sunshine with the most delicious clearness; every touch of shadow being expressive of some particular truth of structure, and bearing witness to the symmetry into which the whole mass has been reduced. Where this operation has gone on long, and vegetation has assisted in softening the outlines, we have our ground brought into graceful and irregular curves, of infinite variety, but yet always so connected with each other, and guiding to each other, that the eye never feels them as *separate* things, nor feels inclined to count them, nor perceives a likeness in one to the other; they are not repetitions of each other, but are different parts of one system. Each would be imperfect without the one next to it.

§ 13. *The ground of Teniers.*

Now it is all but impossible to express distinctly the particulars wherein this fine character of curve consists, and to show in definite examples what it is which makes one representation right and another wrong. The ground of Teniers, for instance, in No. 189 in the Dulwich Gallery,[1] is an example of all that is wrong. It is a representation of the forms of shaken and disturbed soil, such as we should see here and there after an earthquake, or over the ruins of fallen buildings. It has not one contour or character of the soil of nature, and yet I can scarcely tell you why, except that the curves repeat one another, and are monotonous in their flow, and are unbroken by the delicate angle and momentary pause with which the feeling of nature would have touched them; and are disunited, so that the eye leaps from this to that, and does not pass from one to the other without being able to stop, drawn on by the continuity of line; neither is there any undulation or furrowing of watermark, nor in one spot or atom of the whole surface is there distinct explanation of form to the eye by means of a determined shadow; all is mere sweeping of the brush over the surface with various

[1] [Now No. 95, "A Castle and its Proprietor."]

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ground colours, without a single indication of character by means of real shade.[1]

§ 14. *Importance of these minor parts and points.*

Let not these points be deemed unimportant: the truths of form in common ground are quite as valuable (let me anticipate myself for a moment), quite as beautiful, as any others which nature presents; and in lowland landscape they furnish a species of line which it is quite impossible to obtain in any other way, the alternately flowing and broken line of mountain scenery, which, however small its scale, is always of inestimable value, contrasted with the repetitions of organic form which we are

[1] [Between paragraphs 13 and 14, eds. 1 and 2 insert the two following paragraphs:—

§ 16. *And of Copley Fielding.*

"Now I may point, in contradistinction to this to one of Copley Fielding's down or moor foregrounds, and I may tell you that its curves are right and true, and that it is the real ground of nature, such as she produces fresh designs and contours of with every shower; the foreground of his 'Bolton Abbey,' in last year's Academy, is a good instance; and yet I can scarcely tell you wherein its truth consists, except by repeating the same sentences about continuity and variety of curves, which, after all, are things only to be felt and found out for yourself, by diligent study of free nature. No words will explain it, unless you go and lie for a summer or two up to your shoulders in heather, with the purple, elastic ground about you defined against the sky like fantastic mountains. After you have done this you will feel what truth of ground is, and till then, I cannot in such fine points as these, tell it you; but the facts are not the less certain because they are inexplicable. The ground of Teniers is anatomically wrong, and that of Fielding right, however little one person may be able to feel that they are so, or another to explain why.

§ 17. *The foreground of Both.*

"It is an easier matter, however, to point out the fallacy of pieces of ground undisguised by vegetation, such as Both's foreground in No. 41 of the Dulwich Gallery. If this were meant for rock it would come under the same category with Salvator's above mentioned, but its evident brown colour seems to mark it for earth; and I believe that no eye can help feeling that the series of peaks with hollow curves between them which emerge from the grass in the centre, are such as could not support themselves for ten minutes against an April shower. Concave descending curves can only be obtained in loose soil when there is some knotted and strong protection of roots and leaves at the top, and even then they are generally rough and broken; but whenever earth is exposed, as here, it is reduced, either by crumbling in heat, or by being washed down in rain, to convex forms furrowed by little ravines, and always tending as they descend to something like an even slope. Hence nature's ground never by any chance assumes such forms as those of Both, and if—which it would be most difficult to do—a piece of even the toughest clay were artificially reduced to them; with the first noon-day sun, or first summer shower, she would have it all her own way again."

Fielding's "Bolton Abbey" was No. 12 in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1842; for a remark on its bad hanging, see above, p. 198. No. 41 in the Dulwich Gallery (now No. 12) is "A Piece of Rough Ground with a View on a Lake," by Jan Both.]

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compelled to give in vegetation. A really great artist dwells on every inch of exposed soil with care and delight, and renders it one of the most essential, speaking, and pleasurable parts of his composition. And be it remembered, that the man who, in the most conspicuous part of his foreground, will violate truth with every stroke of the pencil, is not likely to be more careful in other parts of it; and that, in the little bits which I fix upon for animadversion, I am not pointing out solitary faults, but only the most characteristic examples of the falsehood which is everywhere, and which renders the whole foreground one mass of contradictions and absurdities. Nor do I myself see wherein the great difference lies between a master and a novice, except in the rendering of the finer truths of which I am at present speaking. To handle the brush freely, and to paint grass and weeds with accuracy enough to satisfy the eye, are accomplishments which a year or two's practice will give any man: but to trace among the grass and weeds those mysteries of invention and combination by which nature appeals to the intellect; to render the delicate fissure, and descending curve, and undulating shadow of the mouldering soil, with gentle and fine finger, like the touch of the rain itself; to find even in all that appears most trifling or contemptible, fresh evidence of the constant working of the Divine power "for glory and for beauty," and to teach it and proclaim it to the unthinking and the unregarding; this, as it is the peculiar province and faculty of the master-mind, so it is the peculiar duty which is demanded of it by the Deity.

§ 15. The observance of them is the real distinction between the master and the novice.

It would take me no reasonable or endurable time, if I were to point out one half of the various kinds and classes of falsehood which the inventive faculties of the old masters succeeded in originating, in the drawing of foregrounds. It is not this man nor that man, nor one school nor another; all agree in entire repudiation of everything resembling facts, and in the high degree of absurdity of what they substitute for them. Even Cuyp, who

§ 16. Ground of Cuyp.

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evidently saw and studied a certain kind of nature, as an artist should do; not fishing for idealities, but taking what nature gave him, and thanking her for it; even he appears to have supposed that the drawing of the earth might be trusted to chance or imagination, and, in consequence, strews his banks with lumps of dough, instead of stones. Perhaps, however, the foregrounds[1] of Claude afford the most remarkable instances of childishness and incompetence of all. That of his morning landscape, with the large group of trees and high single-arched bridge, in the National Gallery,[2] is a fair example of the kind of error into which he constantly falls. I will not say anything of the agreeable composition of the three banks, rising one behind another from the water, except only that it amounts to a demonstration that all three were painted in the artist's study, without any reference to nature whatever. In fact, there is quite enough intrinsic evidence in each of them to prove this, seeing that what appears to be meant for vegetation upon them, amounts to nothing more than a green stain on their surfaces, the more evidently false because the leaves of the trees twenty yards farther off are all perfectly visible and distinct; and that the sharp lines with which each cuts against that beyond it are not only such as crumbling earth could never show or assume, but are maintained through their whole progress ungraduated, unchanging, and unaffected by any of the circumstances of varying shade to which every one of nature's lines is inevitably subjected. In fact, the whole arrangement is the impotent[3] struggle of a tyro to express by successive edges that approach of earth which he finds himself incapable of expressing by the drawing of the surface. Claude wished to make you understand that the edge of his pond came nearer and nearer; he had probably often tried to do this with an

§ 17. *And of Claude.*

§ 18. *The entire weakness and childishness of the latter,*

[1] [For "foregrounds," eds. 1–4 read, "beautiful foregrounds" (in inverted commas).]

[2] [No. 2, "Cephalus and Procris"; see also below, § 27 *n.*]

[3] [For "In fact . . . impotent," eds. 1 and 2 read, "In fact, the whole arrangement is precisely, in foreground, what we before saw in Claude's hills,—the impotent," etc.]

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unbroken bank, or a bank only varied by the delicate and harmonized anatomy of nature; and he had found that owing to his total ignorance of the laws of perspective such efforts on his part invariably ended in his reducing his pond to the form of a round O, and making it look perpendicular. Much comfort and solace of mind, in such unpleasant circumstances, may be derived from instantly dividing the obnoxious bank into a number of successive promontories, and developing their edges with completeness and intensity. Every school-girl's drawing, as soon as her mind has arrived at so great a degree of enlightenment as to perceive that perpendicular water is objectionable, will supply us with edifying instances of this unfailing resource; and this foreground of Claude's is only one out of the thousand cases in which he has been reduced to it. And if it be asked, how the proceeding differs from that of nature, I have only to point to nature herself, as she is drawn in the foreground of Turner's Mercury and Argus,[1] a case precisely similar to Claude's, of earthy crumbling banks cut away by water. It will be found in this picture (and I am now describing nature's work and Turner's with the same words) that the whole distance is given by retirement of solid surface; and that if ever an edge is expressed, it is only felt for an instant, and then lost again; so that the eye cannot stop at it and prepare for a long jump to another like it, but is guided over it, and round it into the hollow beyond; and thus the whole receding mass of ground, going back for more than a quarter of a mile, is made completely *one*, no part of it is separated from the rest for an instant, it is all united, and its modulations are *members*, not *divisions* of its mass. But these modulations are countless; heaving here, sinking there; now swelling, now mouldering; now blending, now breaking; giving, in fact, to the foreground of this universal master precisely the same qualities which we have before seen in his hills, as Claude gave to his foreground precisely the same

§ 19. *Compared with the work of Turner.*

[1] [For list of other references to this picture, see p. 264 *n.*]

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qualities which we had before found in *his* hills,—infinite unity in the one case, finite division in the other.

§ 20. *General features of Turner's foreground.*

Let us, then, having now obtained some insight into the principles of the old masters in foreground drawing, contrast them throughout with those of our great modern master. The investigation of the excellence of Turner's drawing becomes shorter and easier as we proceed, because the great distinctions between his work and that of other painters are the same, whatever the object or subject may be; and after once showing the general characters of the particular specific forms under consideration, we have only to point, in the works of Turner, to the same principles of infinity and variety in carrying them out, which we have before insisted upon with reference to other subjects.

§ 21. *Geological structure of his rocks in the Fall of the Tees.*

The Upper Fall of the Tees, Yorkshire, engraved in the England series,[1] may be given as a standard example of rock-drawing to be opposed to the work of Salvator. We have, in the great face of rock which divides the two streams, horizontal lines which indicate the real direction of the strata, and the same lines are given in ascending perspective all along the precipice on the right. But we see also on the central precipice fissures absolutely vertical, which inform us of one series of joints dividing these horizontal strata; and the exceeding smoothness and evenness of the precipice itself inform us that it has been caused by a great separation of substance in the direction of another more important line of joints, running across the river. Accordingly we see on the left that the whole summit of the precipice is divided again and again by this great series of joints into vertical beds, which lie against each other with their sides toward us, and are traversed downwards by the same vertical lines traceable on the face of the central cliff. Now, let me direct especial attention to the way in which Turner has marked, over this general and grand unity of structure,

[1] [No. 2 of *England and Wales*. For further references to the drawing, see below, pp. 491, 553; also vol. iv. of *Modern Painters*, ch. xviii. § 12.]

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the modifying effects of the weather and the torrent. Observe how the whole surface of the hill above the precipice on the left* is brought into one smooth unbroken curvature of gentle convexity, until it comes to the edge of the precipice, and then, just on the angle (compare § 2), breaks into the multiplicity of fissure which marks its geological structure. Observe how every one of the separate blocks into which it divides is rounded and convex in its salient edges turned to the weather, and how every one of their inward angles is marked clearly and sharply by the determined shadow and transparent reflex. Observe how exquisitely graceful are all the curves of the convex surfaces, indicating that every one of them has been modelled by the winding and undulating of running water; and how gradually they become steeper as they descend, until they are torn down into the face of the precipice. Finally, observe the exquisite variety of all the touches which express fissure or shade; every one in varying direction and with new form, and yet of which one deep[1] and marked piece of shadow indicates the greatest proximity; and from this every shade becomes fainter and fainter, until all are lost in the obscurity and dimness of the hanging precipice and the shattering fall. Again, see how the same fractures just upon the edge take place with the central cliff above the right-hand fall, and how the force of the water is told us by the confusion of débris accumulated in its channel. In fact, the great quality about Turner's drawings which more especially proves their transcendent truth is, the capability they afford us of reasoning on past and future phenomena, just as if we had the actual rocks before us; for this indicates not that one truth

§ 22. *Their convex surfaces and fractured edges;*

§ 23. *And perfect unity.*

* In the light between the waterfall and the large dark mass on the extreme left.

[1] [Instead of "and yet of which one deep," eds. 1–4 read :—
"and yet throughout indicating that perfect parallelism which at once explained to us the geology of the rock, and falling into one grand mass, treated with the same simplicity of light and shade, which a great portrait painter adopts in treating the features of the human face, which, though each has its own separate chiaroscuro, never disturb the wholeness and grandeur of the head, considered as one ball or mass. So here, one deep," etc.]

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is given, or another, not that a pretty or interesting morsel has been selected here and there, but that the whole truth has been given, with all the relations of its parts;[1] so that we can pick and choose our points of pleasure or of thought for ourselves, and reason upon the whole with the same certainty which we should after having climbed and hammered over the rocks bit by bit. With this drawing before him, a geologist could give a lecture upon the whole system of aqueous erosion, and speculate as safely upon the past and future states of this very spot, as if he were standing and getting wet with the spray. He would tell you at once, that the waterfall was in a state of rapid recession; that it had once formed a wide cataract just at the place where the figure is sitting on the heap of débris; and that when it was there, part of it came down by the channel on the left, its bed being still marked by the delicately chiselled lines of fissure. He would tell you that the foreground had also once been the top of the fall, and that the vertical fissures on the right of it were evidently then the channel of a side stream. He would tell you that the fall was then much lower than it is now, and that being lower, it had less force, and cut itself a narrower bed; and that the spot where it reached the higher precipice is marked by the expansion of the wide basin which its increased violence has excavated, and by the gradually increasing concavity of the rocks below, which we see have been hollowed into a complete vault by the elastic bound of the water. But neither he nor I could tell you with what exquisite and finished marking of every fragment and particle of soil or rock, both in its own structure and the evidence it bears of these great influences, the whole of this is confirmed and carried out.[2]

§ 24. Various parts whose history is told us by the details of the drawing.

With this inimitable drawing we may compare the rocks

[1] [See *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. x. § 5, where Ruskin reaffirms this statement and refutes the objection of "careless readers," that it was inconsistent to admire both Turner and the "hard and distinct" Pre-Raphaelites. "Nobody," he there says, "had ever given so many hard and downright facts" as Turner.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 add, "You must work and watch for this; it is not to be taught by words."]

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in the foreground of the Llanthony.[1] These latter are not divided by joints, but into thin horizontal and united beds, which the torrent in its times of flood has chiselled away, leaving one exposed under another, with the sweeping marks of its eddies upon their edges. And here we have an instance of an exception to a general rule, occasioned by particular and local action. We have seen that the action of water over any surface *universally*, whether falling, as in rain, or sweeping, as a torrent, induces convexity of form. But when we have rocks *in situ*, as here, exposed at their edges to the violent action of an eddy, that eddy will cut a vault or circular space for itself (as we saw on a large scale with the high waterfall), and we have a concave curve interrupting the general contours of the rock. And thus Turner (while every edge of his masses is rounded, and, the moment we rise above the level of the water, all is convex) has interrupted the great contours of his strata with concave curves, precisely where the last waves of the torrent have swept against the exposed edges of the beds. Nothing could more strikingly prove the depth of that knowledge by which every touch of this consummate artist is regulated, that universal command of subject which never acts for a moment on anything conventional or habitual, but fills every corner and space with new evidence of knowledge, and fresh manifestation of thought.

§ 25. Beautiful instance of an exception to general rules in the Llanthony.

The Lower Fall of the Tees,[2] with the chain-bridge, might serve us for an illustration of all the properties and forms of vertical beds of rock, as the Upper Fall has of horizontal; but we pass rather to observe, in detached pieces of foreground, the particular modulation of parts which cannot be investigated in the grand combinations of general mass.

§ 26. Turner's drawing of detached blocks of weathered stone.

The blocks of stone which form the foreground of the

[1] [*Cf.* above, p. 401.]

[2] [Really the Upper Fall (see note on p. 424). In No. 24 of *England and Wales*; for other references, see below, sec. v. ch. iii. §§ 21–25, sec. vi. ch. i. § 15, pp. 553–556, 587. It is engraved in vol. i. of *Turner and Ruskin*.]

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Ulleswater[1] are, I believe, the finest example in the world of the finished drawing of rocks which have been subjected to violent aqueous action. Their surfaces seem to palpitate from the fine touch of the waves, and every part of them is rising or falling, in soft swell or gentle depression, though the eye can scarcely trace the fine shadows on which this chiselling of the surface depends. And with all this, every block of them has individual character, dependent on the expression of the angular lines of which its contours were first formed, and which is retained and felt through all the modulation and melting of the water-worn surface. And what is done here in the most important part of the picture, to be especially attractive to the eye, is often done by Turner with lavish and overwhelming power in the accumulated débris of a wide foreground, strewed with the ruin of ages; as, for instance, in the Junction of the Greta and Tees,[2] where he has choked the torrent bed with a mass of shattered rock, thrown down with the profusion and carelessness of nature herself; and yet every separate block is a study, chiselled[3] and varied in its parts, as if it were to be the chief member of a separate subject, yet without ever losing in a single instance its subordinate position, or occasioning, throughout the whole accumulated multitude, the repetition of a single line.

§ 27. And of complicated foreground,

I consider cases like these, of perfect finish and new conception, applied and exerted in the drawing of every member of a confused and almost countlessly divided system, about the most wonderful, as well as the most characteristic, passages of Turner's foregrounds. It is done not less marvellously, though less distinctly, in the individual parts of all his broken ground, as in examples like these of separate blocks. The articulation of such a passage as the nearest bank, in the picture we have

[1] [In No. 19 of *England and Wales*; *cf.* below, p. 541, and *cf.* *Pre-Raphaelitism*, § 51.]

[2] [Engraved in Whitaker's *Richmondshire* (i. 184). The drawing, formerly in Ruskin's collection, was given by him to Oxford; it is No. 2 in the Standard Series in the Ruskin Drawing School: for his description of it, see catalogue of that collection.]

[3] [Eds. 1–4 read, "study (and has evidently been drawn from nature), chiselled."]

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already spoken of at so great length,[1] the Upper Fall of the Tees, might serve us for a day's study if we were to go into it part by part; but it is impossible to do this, except with the pencil; we can only repeat the same general observations about eternal change and unbroken unity, and tell you to observe how the eye is kept throughout on solid and retiring surfaces, instead of being thrown, as by Claude, on flat and equal edges. You cannot find a single edge in Turner's work; you are everywhere kept upon round surfaces, and you go back on these you cannot tell how, never taking a leap, but progressing imperceptibly along the unbroken bank, till you find yourself a quarter of a mile into the picture, beside the figure at the bottom of the waterfall.[2]

§ 28. *And of loose soil.*

Finally, the bank of earth on the right of the grand drawing of Penmaen Mawr[3] may be taken as the standard of the representation of soft soil modelled by descending rain; and may serve to show us how exquisite in character are the resultant lines, and how full of every species of attractive and even sublime quality, if we only are wise enough not to scorn the study of them. The higher the mind, it may be taken as a universal rule, the less it will scorn that which appears to be small or unimportant; and the rank of a painter may always be determined by observing how he uses, and with what respect he views the minutiæ of nature. Greatness of mind is not shown by admitting small things, but by making small things great under its influence. He who can take no interest in what is small, will take false interest in what is great; he who cannot make a bank sublime will make a mountain ridiculous.

[1] [Above, § 21.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 here insert a further paragraph:—

"I may, perhaps, illustrate the particular qualities of modulation in ground, which are so remarkable in Turner, by a little bit of accidental truth in Claude. In the picture before spoken of, with the three banks, the little piece of ground above the cattle, between the head of the brown cow and the tail of the white one, is well articulated, just where it turns into shade. The difference between this and the hard edges of the banks on the left can scarcely but be felt."

The picture referred to is "Cephalus and Procris," above, p. 484 (§ 17).]

[3] [In No. 17 of *England and Wales.*]

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It is not until we have made ourselves acquainted with these simple facts of form as they are illustrated by the slighter works of Turner, that we can become at all competent to enjoy the combination of all, in such works as the Mercury and Argus, or Bay of Baiæ, in which the mind is at first bewildered by the abundant outpouring of the master's knowledge.[1] Often as I have paused before these noble works, I never felt on returning to them as if I had ever seen them before; for their abundance is so deep and various, that the mind, according to its own temper at the time of seeing, perceives some new series of truths rendered in them, just as it would on revisiting a natural scene; and detects new relations and associations of these truths which set the whole picture in a different light at every return to it. And this effect is especially caused by the management of the foreground: for the more marked objects of the picture may be taken one by one, and thus examined and known; but the foregrounds of Turner are so united in all their parts that the eye cannot take them by divisions, but is guided from stone to stone and bank to bank, discovering truths totally different in aspect according to the direction in which it approaches them, and approaching them in a different direction, and viewing them as part of a new system every time that it begins its course at a new point. One lesson, however, we are invariably taught by all, however approached or viewed, that the work of the Great Spirit of nature is as deep and unapproachable in the lowest as in the noblest objects; that the Divine mind is as visible in its full energy of operation on every lowly bank and mouldering stone, as in the lifting of the pillars of

§ 29. The unison of all in the ideal foregrounds of the Academy pictures.

§ 30. And the great lesson to be received from all.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add:—

"But if we once comprehend the excellence of the drawings, we shall find that these ideal works are little more than glorious combinations of the minor studies, combinations uniting the gathered thought and disciplined knowledge of years. It is impossible to go into them in writing, the mind itself is lost in the contemplation of their infinity, and how shall words express or follow that which to the eye is inexhaustible? Often as I . . ."

For another reference to the "abundance" in these works see pp. 243, 485.]

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heaven, and settling the foundation of the earth; and that to the rightly perceiving mind, there is the same infinity, the same majesty, the same power, the same unity, and the same perfection, manifest in the casting of the clay as in the scattering of the cloud, in the mouldering of the dust as in the kindling of the day-star.

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SECTION V

OF TRUTH OF WATER[1]

CHAPTER I

OF WATER, AS PAINTED BY THE ANCIENTS

§ 1. Sketch of the functions and infinite agency of water.

Of all inorganic substances, acting in their own proper nature, and without assistance or combination, water is the most wonderful. If we think of it as the source of all the changefulness and beauty which we have seen in clouds; then as the instrument by which the earth we have contemplated was modelled into symmetry, and its crags chiselled into grace; then as, in the form of snow, it robes the mountains it has made with that transcendent light which we could not have conceived if we had not seen; then as it exists in the foam of the torrent, in the iris which spans it, in the morning mist which rises from it, in the deep crystalline pools which mirror its hanging shore, in the broad lake and glancing river; finally, in that which is to all human minds the best emblem of unwearied unconquerable power, the wild, various, fantastic, tameless unity of the sea; what shall we compare to this mighty, this universal element, for glory and for beauty? or how shall we follow its eternal changefulness of feeling? It is like trying to paint a soul.[2]

To suggest the ordinary appearance of calm water, to lay

[1] [With regard to this section, see Appendix iv., p. 678 (Preface to *In Montibus Sanctis*), where Ruskin refers to the incompleteness of his treatment of sea-painting; and cf. *The Eagle's Nest*, § 129.]

[2] [§ 1 is § 27 of *Frondes Agrestes*.]

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on canvas as much evidence of surface and reflection as may make us understand that water is meant, is, perhaps, the easiest task of art; and even ordinary running or falling water may be sufficiently rendered, by observing careful curves of projection with a dark ground, and breaking a little white over it, as we see done with judgment and truth by Ruysdael. But[1] to paint the actual play of hue on the reflective surface, or to give the forms and fury of water when it begins to show itself; to give the flashing and rocket-like velocity of a noble cataract, or the precision and grace of the sea wave, so exquisitely modelled, though so mockingly transient, so mountainous in its form, yet so cloud-like in its motion, with its variety and delicacy of colour, when every ripple and wreath has some peculiar passage of reflection upon itself alone, and the radiating and scintillating sunbeams are mixed with the dim hues of transparent depth and dark rock below; to do this perfectly is beyond the power of man; to do it even partially has been granted to but one or two, even of those few who have dared to attempt it.

§ 2. The ease with which a common representation of it may be given. The impossibility of a faithful one.

As the general laws which govern the appearances of water have equal effect on all its forms, it would be injudicious to treat the subject in divisions; for the same forces which govern the waves and foam of the torrent are equally influential on those of the sea, and it will be more convenient to glance generally at the system of water-painting of each school and artist, than to devote separate chapters to the examination of the lake, river, or sea-painting of all. We shall, therefore, vary our usual plan, and look forward at the water-painting of the ancients; then at that of the moderns generally; lastly, at that of Turner.[2]

§ 3. Difficulty of properly dividing the subject.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 omit the words, "to paint the actual play of hue on the reflective surface, or. . ."]

[2] [From this point onwards the chapter was almost entirely different in eds. 1 and 2. The earlier version of the chapter is, therefore, printed *in extenso*, see pp. 520–527. The chapter, as it stood in eds. 1 and 2, was subjected to criticism in the *Art Union Journal* and the *Artist and Amateur's Magazine*, to which Ruskin replied in the latter

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§ 4. Inaccuracy of study of water-effect among all painters.

It is necessary in the outset to state briefly one or two of the optical conditions by which the appearance of the surface of water is affected; to describe them all would require a separate essay, even if I possessed the requisite knowledge, which I do not. The accidental modifications under which general laws come into play are innumerable, and often, in their extreme complexity, inexplicable, I suppose, even by men of the most extended optical knowledge. What I shall here state are a few only of the broadest laws verifiable by the reader's immediate observation, but of which, nevertheless, I have found artists frequently ignorant; owing to their habit of sketching from nature without thinking or reasoning, and especially of finishing at home. It is not often, I believe, that an artist draws the reflections in water as he sees them; over large spaces, and in weather that is not very calm, it is nearly impossible to do so; when it is possible, sometimes in haste, and sometimes in idleness, and sometimes under the idea of improving nature, they are slurred or misrepresented. It is so easy to give something like a suggestive resemblance of calm water, that, even when the landscape is finished from nature, the water is merely indicated as something that may be done at any time; and then, in the home work, come the cold leaden greys with some, and the violent blues and greens with others, and the horizontal lines with the feeble, and the bright touches and sparkles with the dexterous, and everything that is shallow and commonplace with all. Now, the fact is that there is hardly a road-side pond or pool which has not as much landscape *in* it as above it. It is not the brown, muddy, dull thing we suppose it to be; it has a heart like ourselves, and in the bottom of that there are the boughs of the tall trees, and the blades of the shaking grass, and all manner of hues of variable pleasant light out of the sky. Nay, the ugly gutter, that stagnates over the drain-bars

magazine; see Appendix ii. in this volume, pp. 655–661. The later version, as it here stands, must have been written after May 1846; for it includes a passage from the author's diary of that date (see below, § 7); the third ed. was published in the following September, before Ruskin had returned from his foreign tour in that year.]

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in the heart of the foul city, is not altogether base; down in that, if you will look deep enough, you may see the dark serious blue of far-off sky, and the passing of pure clouds. It is at your own will that you see, in that despised stream, either the refuse of the street, or the image of the sky. So it is with almost all other things that we unkindly despise. Now, this far-seeing is just the difference between the great and the vulgar painter: the common man *knows* the road-side pool is muddy, and draws its mud; the great painter sees beneath and behind the brown surface what will take him a day's work to follow, but he follows it, cost what it will. And if painters would only go out to the nearest common, and take the nearest dirty pond among the furze, and draw that thoroughly; not considering that it is water that they are drawing, and that water must be done in a certain way, but drawing determinedly what they *see*;—that is to say, all the trees, and their shaking leaves, and all the hazy passages of disturbing sunshine; and the bottom seen in the clearer little bits at the edge, and the stones of it; and all the sky, and the clouds far down in the middle, drawn as completely as the real clouds above;—they would come home with such a notion of water-painting as might save me and every one else all trouble of writing about the matter. But now they do nothing of the kind, but take the ugly, round, yellow surface for granted, or else "improve" it at home; and, instead of giving that refined, complex, delicate, but saddened and gloomy reflection in the polluted water, they clear it up with coarse flashes of yellow, and green, and blue, and spoil their own eyes, and hurt ours; failing, of course, still more hopelessly in reaching the pure light of waves thrown loose. And so Canaletto is still thought to have painted canals, and Vandevelde and Backhuysen to have painted sea; and the uninterpreted streams and maligned sea hiss shame upon us from all their rocky beds and hollow shores.

I approach this part of my subject with more despondency than any other, and that for several reasons; first, the

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water-painting of all the elder landscape painters, except a few of the better passages of Claude and Ruysdael, is so execrable, so beyond all expression and explanation bad, and Claude's and Ruysdael's best so cold and valueless, that I do not know how to address those who like such painting; I do not know what their sensations are respecting sea. I can perceive nothing in Vandevelde or Backhuysen of the lowest redeeming merit: no power, no presence of intellect, or evidence of perception of any sort or kind; no resemblance, even the feeblest, of anything natural; no invention, even the most sluggish, of anything agreeable. Had they given us staring green seas with hatchet edges, such as we see Her Majesty's ships so-and-so fixed into by the heads or sterns, in the Royal Academy, the admiration of them would have been comprehensible; there being a natural predilection in the mind of man for green waves with curling tops, but not for clay and wool: so that though I can understand, in some sort, why people admire everything else in the old art, why they admire Salvator's rocks, and Claude's foregrounds, and Hobbima's trees, and Paul Potter's cattle, and Jan Steen's pans; and while I can perceive in all these likings a root which seems right and legitimate, and to be appealed to; yet when I find they can even *endure* the *sight* of a Backhuysen on their room walls (I speak seriously) it makes me hopeless at once. I may be wrong, or they may be wrong, or at least I can conceive of no principle or opinion common between us, which either can address or understand in the other; and yet I am wrong in this want of conception, for I know that Turner once liked Vandevelde,[1] and I can trace the evil influence of Vandevelde on most of his early sea-painting, but Turner certainly could not have liked Vandevelde without *some* legitimate cause. Another discouraging point is, that I cannot catch a wave, nor daguerreotype it, and so there is no coming to pure demonstration; but the forms and hues

§ 5. Difficulty of treating this part of the subject.

[1] [See ch. xvii. ("Of the Teachers of Turner") in vol. iii. of *Modern Painters*, § 30.]

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of water must always be in some measure a matter of dispute and feeling, and the more so because there is no perfect or even tolerably perfect sea-painting to refer to. The sea never has been, and I fancy never will be nor can be painted; it is only suggested by means of more or less spiritual and intelligent conventionalism: and though Turner has done enough to suggest the sea mightily and gloriously, after all it is by conventionalism still, and there remains so much that is unlike nature, that it is always possible for those who do not feel his power to justify their dislike, on very sufficient and reasonable grounds; and to maintain themselves obstinately unreceptant of the good, by insisting on the deficiency which no mortal hand can supply, and which commonly is most manifest on the one hand, where most has been achieved on the other.

With calm water the case is different. Facts are ascertainable and demonstrable there, and, by the notice of one or two of the simplest, we may obtain some notion of the little success and intelligence of the elder painters in this easier field, and so prove their probable failure in contending with greater difficulties.

§ 6. General laws which regulate the phenomena of water. First, the imperfection of its reflective surface.

I. Water, of course, owing to its transparency, possesses not a perfectly reflective surface, like that of speculum metal, but a surface whose reflective power is dependent on the angle at which the rays to be reflected fall. The smaller this angle, the greater are the number of rays reflected. Now, according to the number of rays reflected is the force of the image of objects above, and according to the number of rays transmitted is the perceptibility of objects below, the water. Hence the visible transparency and reflected power of water are in inverse ratio. In looking down into it from above, we receive transmitted rays which exhibit either the bottom or the objects floating in the water; or else if the water be deep and clear, we receive very few rays, and the water looks black. In looking along water we receive reflected rays, and therefore the image of objects above it. Hence, in shallow water on a

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level shore the bottom is seen at our feet, clearly; it becomes more and more obscure as it retires, even though the water do not increase in depth; and at a distance of twelve or twenty yards, more or less according to our height above the water, becomes entirely invisible, lost in the lustre of the reflected surface.

§ 7. The inherent hue of water modifies dark reflections, and does not affect bright ones.

II. The brighter the objects reflected, the larger the angle at which reflection is visible. It is always to be remembered that, strictly speaking, only light objects are reflected, and that the darker ones are seen only in proportion to the number of rays of light that they can send; so that a dark object comparatively loses its power to affect the surface of water, and the water in the space of a dark reflection is seen partially with the image of the object, and partially transparent. It will be found on observation that under a bank, suppose with dark trees above showing spaces of bright sky, the bright sky is reflected distinctly, and the bottom of the water is in those spaces not seen; but in the dark spaces of reflection we see the bottom of the water, and the colour of that bottom and of the water itself mingles with and modifies that of the colour of the trees casting the dark reflection.

This is one of the most beautiful circumstances connected with water surface, for by these means a variety of colour and a grace and evanescence are introduced in the reflection otherwise impossible. Of course, at great distances, even the darkest objects cast distinct images, and the hue of the water cannot be seen; but, in near water, the occurrence of its own colour modifying the dark reflections while it leaves light ones unaffected is of infinite value.

Take, by way of example, an extract from my own diary at Venice.[1]

[1] [This is from the diary of 1846, very slightly abbreviated; Ruskin went abroad with his parents in that year from April to September. The last paragraph of the citation in the text does not appear in the diary, where, however, there is a page torn out—perhaps to be used as "copy" here.]

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"May 17th, 4 P.M. Looking east the water is calm, and reflects the sky and vessels, with this peculiarity: the sky, which is pale blue, is in its reflection of the same kind of blue, only a little deeper; but the *vessels' hulls, which are black, are reflected in pale sea green*, i.e. the natural colour of the water under sunlight; while the *orange masts* of the vessels, wet with a recent shower, are reflected *without change of colour*, only not quite so bright as above. One ship has a white, another a red stripe," (I ought to have said, running horizontally along the gunwales,) "*of these the water takes no notice.*

"What is curious, a boat passes across with white and dark figures, the water reflects the dark ones in green, and misses out all the white; this is chiefly owing to the dark images being opposed to the bright reflected sky.

"A boat swinging near the quay casts an apparent shadow on the rippled water. This appearance I find to be owing altogether to the increased *reflective* power of the water in the shaded space; for the farther sides of the ripples therein take the deep pure blue of the sky, coming strongly dark on the pale green, and the nearer sides take the pale grey of the cloud, hardly darker than the bright green."

I have inserted the last two paragraphs[1] because they will be useful to us presently; all that I wish to insist upon here is the showing of the local colour (pea-green) of the water in the spaces which were occupied by dark reflections, and the unaltered colour of the bright ones.

III. Clear water takes no shadow, and that for two reasons: a perfect surface of speculum metal takes no shadow (this the reader may instantly demonstrate for himself), and a perfectly transparent body, as air, takes no shadow, hence water, whether transparent or reflective, takes no shadow.

§ 8. *Water takes no shadow.*

[1] [The insertion was first made in ed. 4. In ed. 3 the passage, "A boat swinging . . . bright green," did not appear; and instead of "I have inserted . . . because they will," the words here were: "I have left the passage about the white and red stripe, because it will," etc.]

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But shadows, or the forms of them, appear on water frequently and sharply: it is necessary carefully to explain the causes of these, as they form one of the most eminent sources of error in water-painting.

First, water in shade is much more reflective than water in sunlight. Under sunlight the local colour of the water is commonly vigorous and active, and forcibly affects, as we have seen, all the dark reflections, commonly diminishing their depth. Under shade, the reflective power is in a high degree increased,* and it will be found most frequently that the forms of shadows are expressed on the surface of water, not by actual shade, but by more genuine reflection of objects above. This is another most important and valuable circumstance, and we owe to it some phenomena of the highest beauty.

A very muddy river, as the Arno for instance at Florence, is seen during sunshine of its own yellow colour, rendering all reflections discoloured and feeble. At twilight it recovers its reflective power to the fullest extent, and the mountains of Carrara are seen reflected in it as clearly as if it were a crystalline lake. The Mediterranean, whose determined blue yields to hardly any modifying colour in day-time, receives at evening the image of its rocky shores. On our own seas, seeming shadows are seen constantly cast in purple and blue, upon pale green. These are no shadows, but the pure reflection of dark or blue sky above, seen in the shadowed space, refused by the local colour of the sea in the sunlighted spaces, and turned more or less purple by the opposition of the vivid green.

§ 9. Modification of dark reflections by shadow.

We have seen however above, that the local colour of water, while it comparatively refuses dark reflections, accepts bright ones without deadening them. Hence when a shadow is thrown across a space of water of strong local colour, receiving, alternately, light and dark reflections, it has no power of increasing the

* I state this merely as a fact: I am unable satisfactorily to account for it on optical principles, and were it otherwise the investigation would be of little interest to the general reader, and little value to the artist.

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reflectiveness of the water in the bright spaces, still less of diminishing it; hence, on all the dark reflections it is seen more or less distinctly, on all the light ones it vanishes altogether.

Let us take an instance of the exquisite complexity of effect induced by these various circumstances in co-operation.

Suppose a space of clear water showing the bottom, under a group of trees showing sky through their branches, and casting shadows on the surface of the water, which we will suppose also to possess some colour of its own. Close to us, we shall see the bottom, with the shadows of the trees clearly thrown upon it, and the colour of the water seen in its genuineness by transmitted light. Farther off, the bottom will be gradually lost sight of, but it will be seen in the dark reflections much farther than in the light ones. At last it ceases to affect even the former, and the pure surface effect takes place. The blue bright sky is reflected truly, but the dark trees are reflected imperfectly, and the colour of the water is seen instead. Where the shadow falls on these dark reflections a darkness is seen plainly, which is found to be composed of the pure clear reflection of the dark trees; when it crosses the reflection of the sky, the shadow, being thus fictitious, of necessity vanishes.

Farther, on whatever dust and other foulness may be present in water, real shadow of course falls clear and dark in proportion to the quantity of solid substance present. On very muddy rivers, real shadow falls in sunlight nearly as sharply as on land; on our own sea, the apparent shadow caused by increased reflection is much increased in depth by the chalkiness and impurity of the water.

Farther, when surface is rippled, every ripple, up to a certain variable distance on each side of the spectator, and at a certain angle between him and the sun varying with the size and shape of the ripples, reflects to him a small image of the sun. Hence those dazzling fields of expanding light so often seen upon the sea. Any object that comes

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between the sun and these ripples takes from them the power of reflecting the sun, and, in consequence, all their light; hence any intervening objects cast upon such spaces seeming shadows of intense force, and of the exact shape, and in the exact place, of real shadows, and yet which are no more real shadows than the withdrawal of an image of a piece of white paper from a mirror is a shadow on the mirror.

Farther, in all shallow water, more or less in proportion to its shallowness, but in some measure, I suppose, up to depths of forty or fifty fathoms, and perhaps more, the local colour of the water depends in great measure on light reflected from the bottom. This, however, is especially manifest in clear rivers like the Rhone, where the absence of the light reflected from below forms an apparent shadow, often visibly detached some distance from the floating object which casts it.

§ 10. *Examples on the water of the Rhone.*

The following extract from my own diary at Geneva,[1] with the last paragraph of that already given at Venice, illustrates both this and the other points we have been stating.

"Geneva, 21st April, morning. The sunlight falls from the cypresses of Rousseau's island straight towards the bridge. The shadows of the bridge and of the trees fall on the water in leaden purple, opposed to its general hue of aquamarine green. This green colour is caused by the light being reflected from the bottom, though the bottom is not seen; as is evident by its becoming paler towards the middle of the river, where the water shoals, on which pale part the purple shadow of the small bridge falls most forcibly; which shadow, however, is still only apparent, being the absence of this reflected light, associated with the increased reflective power of the water, which in those spaces reflects blue sky above. A boat swings in the shoal water; its reflection is cast in a transparent pea-green, which is considerably darker than the

[1] [This again is the diary of 1846.]

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pale aquamarine of the surface at the spots. Its shadow is detached from it just about half the depth of the reflection, which, therefore, forms a bright green light between the keel of the boat and its shadow; where the shadow cuts the reflection, the reflection is darkest and something like the true colour of the boat; where the shadow falls out of the reflection, it is of a leaden purple, pale. Another boat, nearer, in deeper water, shows no shadow whatsoever, and the reflection is marked by its transparent green, while the surrounding water takes a lightish blue reflection from the sky."

The above notes, after what has been said, require no comment; but one more case must be stated belonging to rough water. Every large wave of the sea is in ordinary circumstances divided into, or rather covered by, innumerable smaller waves, each of which, in all probability, from some of its edges or surfaces reflects the sunbeams; and hence result a glitter, polish, and vigorous light over the whole flank of the waves, which are, of course, instantly withdrawn within the space of a cast shadow, whose form, therefore, though it does not affect the great body or ground of the water in the least, is sufficiently traceable by the withdrawal of the high lights; also every string and wreath of foam above or within the wave takes real shadow, and thus adds to the impression.

I have not stated one half of the circumstances which produce or influence effects of shadow on water; but, lest I should confuse or weary the reader, I leave him to pursue the subject for himself; enough having been stated to establish this general principle, that whenever shadow is seen on clear water, and, in a measure, even on foul water, it is not, as on land, a dark shade subduing the sunny general hue to a lower tone, but it is a space of an entirely different colour, subject itself, by its susceptibility of reflection, to infinite varieties of depth and hue, and liable, under certain circumstances, to disappear altogether; and that, therefore, whenever we have to paint such shadows, it is not only the hue of the water itself that we have to consider, but all the circumstances by

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which in the position attributed to them such shaded spaces could be affected.

§ 11. *Effect of ripple on distant water.*

IV. If water be rippled, the side of every ripple next to us reflects a piece of the sky, and the side of every ripple farthest from us reflects a piece of the opposite shore, or of whatever objects may be beyond the ripple. But as we soon lose sight of the farther sides of the ripples on the retiring surface, the whole rippled space will then be reflective of the sky only. Thus, where calm distant water receives reflections of high shores, every extent of rippled surface appears as a bright line interrupting that reflection with the colour of the sky.

§ 12. *Elongation of reflections by moving water.*

V. When a ripple or swell is seen at such an angle as to afford a view of its farther side, it carries the reflection of objects farther down than calm water would. Therefore all motion in water elongates reflections, and throws them into confused vertical lines. The real amount of this elongation is not distinctly visible, except in the case of very bright objects, and especially of lights, as of the sun, moon, or lamps by a river shore, whose reflections are hardly ever seen as circles or points, which of course they are on perfectly calm water, but as long streams of tremulous light.

But it is strange that while we are constantly in the habit of seeing the reflection of the sun, which ought to be a mere circle, elongated into a stream of light, extending from the horizon to the shore, the elongation of the reflection of a sail or other object to one half of this extent is received, if represented in a picture, with incredulity by the greater number of spectators. In one of Turner's Venices the image of the white lateen sails of the principal boat is about twice as long as the sails themselves. I have heard the truth of this simple effect disputed over and over again by intelligent persons; and yet, on any water so exposed as the lagoons of Venice, the periods are few and short when there is so little motion as that the reflection of sails a mile off shall not affect the swell within ten feet of the spectator.

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There is, however, a strange arbitrariness about this elongation of reflection, which prevents it from being truly felt. If we see on an extent of lightly swelling water surface the image of a bank of white clouds, with masses of higher accumulation at intervals, the water will not usually reflect the whole bank in an elongated form, but it will commonly take the eminent parts, and reflect them in long straight columns of defined breadth, and miss the intermediate lower parts altogether; and even in doing this it will be capricious, for it will take one eminence, and miss another, with no apparent reason; and often when the sky is covered with white clouds, some of those clouds will cast long towerlike reflections, and others none, so arbitrarily that the spectator is often puzzled to find out which are the accepted and which the refused.

In many cases of this kind it will be found rather that the eye is, from want of use and care, insensible to the reflection than that the reflection is not there; and a little thought and careful observation will show us that what we commonly suppose to be a surface of uniform colour is, indeed, affected more or less by an infinite variety of hues, prolonged, like the sun image, from a great distance, and that our apprehension of its lustre, purity, and even of its surface, is in no small degree dependent on our feeling of these multitudinous hues, which the continual motion of that surface prevents us from analysing or understanding for what they are.

§ 13. *Effect of rippled water on horizontal and inclined images.*

VI. Rippled water, of which we can see the farther side of the waves, will reflect a perpendicular line clearly, a bit of its length being given on the side of each wave, and easily joined by the eye. But if the line slope, its reflection will be excessively confused and disjointed; and if horizontal, nearly invisible. It was this circumstance which prevented the red and white stripe of the ships at Venice, noticed above, from being visible.

VII. Every reflection is the image in reverse of just so much of the objects beside the water, as we could see if we were placed as much under the level of the water as we are

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actually above it. If an object be so far back from the bank, that if we were five feet under the water level we could not see it over the bank, then, standing five feet above the water, we shall not be able to see its image under the reflected bank. Hence the reflection of all objects that have any slope back from the water is shortened, and at last disappears as we rise above it. Lakes seen from a great height appear like plates of metal set in the landscape, reflecting the sky, but none of their shores.

§ 14. *To what extent reflection is visible from above.*

VIII. Any given point of the object above the water is reflected, if reflected at all, at some spot in a vertical line beneath it, so long as the plane of the water is horizontal. On rippled water a slight deflection sometimes takes place, and the image of a vertical tower will slope a little away from the wind, owing to the casting of the image on the sloping sides of the ripples. On the sloping sides of large waves the deflection is in proportion to the slope. For rough practice, after the slope of the wave is determined, let the artist turn his paper until such slope becomes horizontal, and then paint the reflections of any object upon it as on level water, and he will be right.

§ 15. *Deflection of images on agitated water.*

Such are the most common and general optical laws which are to be taken into consideration in the painting of water. Yet, in the application of them as tests of good or bad water-painting, we must be cautious in the extreme. An artist may know all these laws, and comply with them, and yet paint water execrably; and he may be ignorant of every one of them, and, in their turn, and in certain places, violate every one of them, and yet paint water gloriously. Thousands of exquisite effects take place in nature, utterly inexplicable, and which can be believed only while they are seen; the combinations and applications of the above laws are so varied and complicated that no knowledge or labour could, if applied analytically, keep pace with them. Constant and eager watchfulness, and portfolios filled with actual statements

§ 16. *Necessity of watchfulness, as well as of science. Licenses, how taken by great men.*

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of water-effect, drawn on the spot and on the instant, are worth more to the painter than the most extended optical knowledge. Without these all his knowledge will end in a pedantic falsehood; with these it does not matter how gross or how daring here and there may be his violations of this or that law; his very transgressions will be admirable.

It may be said, that this is a dangerous principle to advance in these days of idleness. I cannot help it; it is true, and must be affirmed. Of all contemptible criticism, that is most to be contemned which punishes great works of art when they fight without armour, and refuses to feel or acknowledge the great spiritual refracted sun of their truth, because it has risen at a false angle, and burst upon them before its appointed time. And yet, on the other hand, let it be observed, that it is not feeling, nor fancy, nor imagination, so called, that I have put before science, but watchfulness, experience, affection, and trust in nature; and farther let it be observed, that there is a difference between the license taken by one man and another, which makes one license admirable, and the other punishable; and that this difference is of a kind sufficiently discernible by every earnest person, though it is not so explicable as that we can beforehand say where and when, or even to whom, the license is to be forgiven. In the Paradise of Tintoret, in the Academy of Venice,[1] the angel is seen in the distance driving Adam and Eve out of the garden: not leading them to the gate with consolation or counsel; the painter's strange ardour of conception cannot suffer this.[2] Full speed they fly, the angel and the human creatures; the angel, wrapt in an orb of light, floats on, stooped forward in his fierce flight, and does not touch the ground; the chastised creatures rush before him in abandoned terror. All this might

[1] [This is the picture called "Adam and Eve" (now No. 43 in Room II.). Eve, sitting at the foot of the Tree of Knowledge, clasps its trunk with her right arm, while she offers Adam the apple with her left hand. The episode of the expulsion from Paradise, described by Ruskin above, is shown to the right in the background. For another reference to the "Adam and Eve," see above, p. 173.]

[2] [In eds. 3 and 4 this passage reads :—

"out of the garden. Not, for Tintoret, the leading to the gate with consolation or counsel; his strange ardour of conception is seen here as everywhere."]

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have been invented by another, though in other hands it would assuredly have been offensive; but one circumstance, which completes the story, could have been thought of or dared by none but Tintoret. The angel casts a SHADOW before him towards Adam and Eve.

Now that a globe of light should cast a shadow is a license, as far as mere optical matters are concerned, of the most audacious kind. But how beautiful is the circumstance in its application here, showing that the angel, who is light to all else around him, is darkness to those whom he is commissioned to banish for ever!

I have before noticed the license of Rubens in making his horizon an oblique line.[1] His object is to carry the eye to a given point in the distance. The road winds to it, the clouds fly at it, the trees nod to it, a flock of sheep scamper towards it, a carter points his whip at it, his horses pull for it, the figures push for it, and the horizon slopes to it. If the horizon had been horizontal, it would have embarrassed everything and everybody.

In Turner's Pas de Calais[2] there is a buoy poised on the ridge of a near wave. It casts its reflection vertically down the flank of the wave, which slopes steeply. I cannot tell whether this is license or mistake; I suspect the latter, for the same thing occurs not unfrequently in Turner's seas; but I am almost certain that it would have been done wilfully in this case, even had the mistake been recognized, for the vertical line is necessary to the picture, and the eye is so little accustomed to catch the real bearing of the reflections on the slopes of waves that it does not feel the fault.

In one of the smaller rooms of the Uffizii at Florence, off the Tribune, there are two so-called Claudes;[3] one a pretty wooded landscape, I think a copy, the other a marine with

[1] [See above, p. 188.]

[2] [Otherwise called "Now for the Painter: Passengers going on Board," exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1827, engraved in 1830; in the collection of Mr. John Naylor. For another reference, see below, p. 568.]

[3] [Now rearranged. The landscape, No. 348, is in Room VII.; the marine, "Seapiece, with a Villa," is No. 774 in Room VI.]

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architecture, very sweet and genuine. The sun is setting at the side of the picture, it casts a long stream of light upon the water. This stream of light is oblique, and comes from the horizon, where it is under the sun, to a point near the centre of the picture. If this had been done as a license, it would be an instance of most absurd and unjustifiable license, as the fault is detected by the eye in a moment, and there is no occasion nor excuse for it. But I imagine it to be an instance rather of the harm of imperfect science. Taking his impression instinctively from nature, Claude usually did what is right and put his reflection vertically under the sun; probably, however, he had read in some treatise on optics that every point in this reflection was in a vertical plane between the sun and spectator; or he might have noticed, walking on the shore, that the reflection came straight from the sun to his feet, and intending to indicate the position of the spectator, drew in his next picture the reflection sloping to this supposed point, the error being excusable enough, and plausible enough to have been lately revived and systematized.*

§ 17. *Various licenses or errors in water-painting of Claude, Cuyp, Vandevelde,*

In the picture of Cuyp, No. 83 in the Dulwich Gallery,[1]

* Parsey's *Convergence of Perpendiculars.* I have not space here to enter into any lengthy exposure of this mistake, but reasoning is fortunately unnecessary, the appeal to experiment being easy. Every picture is the representation, as before stated, of a vertical plate of glass, with what might be seen through it drawn on its surface. Let a vertical plate of glass be taken, and wherever it be placed, whether the sun be at its side or at its centre, the reflection will always be found in a vertical line under the sun, parallel with the side of the glass. The pane of any window looking to sea is all the apparatus necessary for this experiment; and yet it is not long since this very principle was disputed with me by a man of much taste and information, who supposed Turner to be wrong in drawing the reflection straight down at the side of his picture, as in his Lancaster Sands, and innumerable other instances.[2]

[1] [Now No. 245, "Landscape with Cattle and Figures;" for a longer notice of the point made above, see below, pp. 524–525; for another reference to the picture, above, p. 272.]

[2] [For Ruskin's discussion of the theories and practice advocated in Parsey's *Convergence of Perpendiculars*, see Vol. I. pp. 215–234. Turner's drawing of Lancaster Sands (Farnley collection) is engraved in vol. ii. of *Turner and Ruskin.*]

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the post at the end of the bank casts three or four radiating reflections. This is visibly neither license nor half-science, but pure ignorance. Again, in the picture attributed to Paul Potter, No. 176 Dulwich Gallery,[1] I believe most people must feel, the moment they look at it, that there is something wrong with the water, that it looks odd, and hard, and like ice or lead; and though they may not be able to tell the reason of the impression, for when they go near they will find it smooth and lustrous, and prettily painted, yet they will not be able to shake off the unpleasant sense of its being like a plate of bad mirror set in a model landscape among moss, rather than like a pond. The reason is, that while this water receives clear reflections from the fence and hedge on the left, and is everywhere smooth and evidently capable of giving true images, it yet reflects none of the cows.

In the Vandevelde[2] (113) there is not a line of ripple or swell in any part of the sea; it is absolutely windless, and the near boat casts its image with great fidelity, which being unprolonged downwards informs us that the calm is perfect (Rule V.), and being unshortened informs us that we are on a level with the water, or nearly so (Rule VII.). Yet underneath the vessel on the right the grey shade which stands for reflection breaks off immediately, descending like smoke a little way below the hull, then leaving the masts and sails entirely unrecorded. This I imagine to be not ignorance, but unjustifiable license. Vandevelde evidently desired to give an impression of great extent of surface, and thought that if he gave the reflection more faithfully, as the tops of the masts would come down to the nearest part of the surface, they would destroy the evidence of distance, and appear to set the ship above the boat, instead of beyond it. I doubt not in such awkward hands that such would indeed have been the case, but he is not on that account to be excused for painting his surface with grey horizontal lines, as is done by nautically

[1] [Now No. 133, "Cattle in a Pool," now attributed to Abraham von Borssom.]
[2] [No. 68 (formerly No. 113) in the Dulwich Gallery, "A Calm"; see also below, §§ 15–18, pp. 523–524, and sec. v. ch. iii. § 6, p. 541.]

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disposed children; for no destruction of distance in the ocean is so serious a loss as that of its liquidity. It is better to feel a want of extent in the sea, than an extent which we might walk upon, or play at billiards upon.

§ 18. *And Canaletto.*

Among all the pictures of Canaletto, which I have ever seen, and they are not a few, I remember but one or two where there is any variation from one method of treatment of the water. He almost always covers the whole space of it with one monotonous ripple, composed of a coat of well chosen, but perfectly opaque and smooth sea-green, covered with a certain number, I cannot state the exact average, but it varies from three hundred and fifty to four hundred and upwards, according to the extent of canvas to be covered, of white concave touches, which are very properly symbolical of ripple.

And, as the canal retires back from the eye, he very geometrically diminishes the size of his ripples, until he arrives at an even field of apparently smooth water. By our sixth rule, this rippling water, as it retires, should show more and more of the reflection of the sky above it, and less and less of that of objects beyond it, until, at two or three hundred yards down the canal, the whole field of water should be one even grey or blue, the colour of the sky, receiving no reflections whatever of other objects. What does Canaletto do? Exactly in proportion as he retires, he displays *more* and *more* of the reflection of objects, and less and less of the sky, until, three hundred yards away, all the houses are reflected as clear and sharp as in a quiet lake.[1]

[1] [This passage was criticized by C. R. Leslie, R.A., in his *Handbook for Young Painters* (1855): "Another instance of the detection of a supposed falsehood by Mr. Ruskin, in a great painter, but which in fact is a truth, occurs in his description of Canaletti's manner of treating water. After describing, with much severity, the ripples in the open part of a canal, he says (and in the way of censure), that, 'three hundred yards away, all the houses are reflected as clear and sharp as in a quiet lake.' And most assuredly they are, because Canaletti painted what he saw, and the water as it approached the houses, being sheltered by them from the breeze that occasions the ripple in the middle of the canal, was there as calm as 'a quiet lake.' The reader will see a fine example of such treatment in the large Canaletti in the National Gallery" (p. 269). Ruskin refers to this criticism, and incidentally replies to it, in *Academy Notes*, 1859, under No. 160. For his general remarks on Leslie's criticisms, see *Academy Notes*, 1855 (Supplement), and *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. App. i., and vol. iv. App. i.]

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This, again, is wilful and inexcusable violation of truth, of which the reason, as in the last case, is the painter's consciousness of weakness. It is one of the most difficult things in the world to express the light reflection of the blue sky on a distant ripple, and to make the eye understand the cause of the colour, and the motion of the apparently smooth water, especially where there are buildings above to be reflected, for the eye never understands the want of the reflection. But it is the easiest and most agreeable thing in the world to give the inverted image; it occupies a vast space of otherwise troublesome distance in the simplest way possible, and is understood by the eye at once. Hence Canaletto is glad, as any other inferior workman would be, not to say obliged, to give the reflections in the distance. But when he comes up close to the spectator, he finds the smooth surface just as troublesome near, as the ripple would have been far off. It is a very nervous thing for an ignorant artist to have a great space of vacant smooth water to deal with, close to him, too far down to take reflections from buildings, and yet which must be made to look flat and retiring and transparent. Canaletto, with his sea-green, did not at all feel himself equal to anything of this kind, and had therefore no resource but in the white touches above described, which occupy the alarming space without any troublesome necessity for knowledge or invention, and supply by their gradual diminution some means of expressing retirement of surface. It is easily understood, therefore, why he should adopt this system, which is just what any awkward workman would naturally cling to, trusting to the inaccuracy of observation of the public to secure him from detection.

§ 19. *Why unpardonable.*

Now in all these cases it is not the mistake or the license itself, it is not the infringement of this or that law, which condemns the picture, but it is the habit of mind in which the license is taken, the cowardice or bluntness of feeling, which infects every part alike, and deprives the whole picture of vitality. Canaletto, had he been a great painter, might have cast his reflections wherever he chose, and

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rippled the water wherever he chose, and painted his sea sloping if he chose, and neither I nor any one else should have dared to say a word against him; but he is a little and a bad painter, and so continues everywhere multiplying and magnifying mistakes, and adding apathy to error, until nothing can any more be pardoned in him. If it be but remembered that every one of the surfaces of those multitudinous ripples is in nature a mirror which catches, according to its position, either the image of the sky or of the silver beaks of the gondolas, or of their black bodies and scarlet draperies, or of the white marble, or the green seaweed on the low stones, it cannot but be felt that those waves would have something more of colour upon them than that opaque dead green. Green they are by their own nature, but it is a transparent and emerald hue, mixing itself with the thousand reflected tints without overpowering the weakest of them; and thus, in every one of those individual waves, the truths of colour are contradicted by Canaletto by the thousand.

Venice is sad and silent now, to what she was in his time; the canals are choked gradually one by one, and the foul water laps more and more sluggishly against the rent foundations: but even yet, could I but place the reader at early morning on the quay below the Rialto, when the market boats, full laden, float into groups of golden colour, and let him watch the dashing of the water about their glittering steely heads, and under the shadows of the vine leaves; and show him the purple of the grapes and the figs, and the glowing of the scarlet gourds carried away in long streams upon the waves; and among them, the crimson fish baskets, plashing and sparkling, and flaming as the morning sun falls on their wet tawny sides: and above, the painted sails of the fishing-boats, orange and white, scarlet and blue; and better than all such florid colour, the naked, bronzed, burning limbs of the seamen, the last of the old Venetian race, who yet keep the right Giorgione colour on their brows and bosoms, in strange contrast with the sallow sensual degradation of the creatures that

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live in the cafés of the Piazza, he would not be merciful to Canaletto any more.

§ 20. *The Dutch painters of sea.*

Yet even Canaletto, in relation to the truths he had to paint, is spiritual, faithful, powerful, compared with the Dutch painters of sea. It is easily understood why his green paint and concave touches should be thought expressive of the water on which the real colours are not to be discerned but by attention, which is never given; but it is not so easily understood, considering how many there are who love the sea, and look at it, that Vandevelde and such others should be tolerated. As I before said, I feel utterly hopeless in addressing the admirers of these men, because I do not know what it is in their works which is supposed to be like nature. Foam appears to me to curdle and cream on the wave sides, and to fly flashing from their crests, and not to be set astride upon them like a peruke; and waves appear to me to fall, and plunge, and toss, and nod, and crash over, and not to curl up like shavings; and water appears to me, when it is grey, to have the grey of stormy air mixed with its own deep, heavy, thunderous, threatening blue, and not the grey of the first coat of cheap paint on a deal door; and many other such things appear to me, which, as far as I can conjecture by what is admired of marine painting, appear to few else; yet I shall have something more to say about these men presently, with respect to the effect they have had upon Turner; and something more, I hope, hereafter, with the help of illustration.[1]

§ 21. *Ruysdael, Claude, and Salvator.*

There is a sea-piece of Ruysdael's in the Louvre,[2] which, though nothing very remarkable in any quality of art, is at least forceful, agreeable, and, as far as it goes, natural; the waves have much freedom of action, and power of colour; the wind blows hard over the

[1] [See ch. xvii. of vol. iii. of *Modern Painters*, "Of the Teachers of Turner." This, again, was a scheme of illustration, only partly carried out in subsequent volumes.]

[2] [Here, in ed. 3 only, was the following footnote :—

"In the last edition of this work was the following passage :—' I wish Ruysdael had painted one or two rough seas. I believe if he had he might have saved the unhappy public from much grievous victimizing, both in mind and pocket, for he would have shown that Vandevelde and Backhuysen are not quite

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shore, and the whole picture may be studied with profit, as a proof that the deficiency of colour and everything else, in Backhuysen's works, is no fault of the Dutch sea. There is sublimity in every field of nature from the pole to the line; and though the painters of one country are often better and greater universally than those of another, this is less because the subjects of art are wanting anywhere, than because one country or one age breeds mighty and thinking men, and another none.

Ruysdael's painting of falling water is also generally agreeable; more than agreeable it can hardly be considered. There appears no exertion of mind in any of his works; nor are they calculated to produce either harm or good by their feeble influence. They are good furniture pictures, unworthy of praise, and undeserving of blame.

The seas of Claude are the finest pieces of water-painting in ancient art. I do not say that I like them, because they appear to me selections of the particular moment when the sea is most insipid and characterless; but I think that they are exceedingly true to the forms and times selected, or at least that the fine instances of them are so, of which there are exceedingly few.

On the right hand of one of the marines of Salvator, in the Pitti palace, there is a passage of sea reflecting the sunrise, which is thoroughly good, and very like Turner; the rest of the picture, as the one opposite to it, utterly virtueless.[1] I have

sea-deities.' The writer has to thank the editor of Murray's Handbook of Painting in Italy for pointing out the oversight. He had passed many days in the Louvre before the above passage was written, but had not been in the habit of pausing long anywhere except in the last two rooms, containing the pictures of the Italian school. The conjecture, however, shows that he had not ill-estimated the power of Ruysdael; nor does he consider it as in anywise unfitting him for the task he has undertaken, that for every hour passed in galleries he has passed many days on the sea-shore."

The sea-piece by Ruysdael in the Louvre is No. 2558. For Ruskin's early studies in that gallery see above, Introduction, p. xx. "In the last edition" should have been "in the former editions," as the passage in question occurred in eds. 1 and 2, see below, § 22 on p. 525.]

[1] [The two pictures are No. 4, "Harbour at Sunrise," and No. 15, "Marine View." In his diary of 1845 Ruskin has a longer note on the two pictures:—

"The little bit of light cast upon the water with the reflexion of the sun focussed by the round image of it is very like Turner, and the best bit certainly

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not seen any other instance of Salvator's painting water with any care; it is usually as conventional as the rest of his work, yet conventionalism is perhaps more tolerable in water-painting than elsewhere; and if his trees and rocks had been good, the rivers might have been generally accepted without objection.

§ 22. *Nicolo Poussin.*

The merits of Poussin as a sea or water painter may, I think, be sufficiently determined by the Deluge in the Louvre,[1] where the breaking up of the fountains of the deep is typified by the capsizing of a wherry over a weir.

In the outer porch of St. Mark's, at Venice, among the mosaics on the roof, there is a representation of the Deluge. The ground is dark blue; the rain is represented in bright white undulating parallel stripes; between these stripes is seen the massy outline of the ark, a bit between each stripe, very dark and hardly distinguishable from the sky; but it has a square window with a bright golden border, which glitters out conspicuously, and leads the eye to the rest: the sea below is almost concealed with dead bodies.

On the font of the church of San Frediano at Lucca there is a representation of, possibly, the Israelites and Egyptians in the Red Sea. The sea is typified by undulating bands of stone, each band composed of three strands (almost the same type is to be seen in the glass-painting of the twelfth and

that I have ever seen from Salvator's hand. It shows that he wanted not capacity and that his powers of observation were keen, but all in vain owing to his shallow, desultory, and vulgar character. The cool light of the water is very admirable, but it is a pity that his execrable taste interferes even with this passage, which approaches very near poetry. The figures which he has put against the light are bathers in the coarsest attitudes, stripping off shirts, stockings, etc., one man naked lying on his back on the water, feet foremost, to show the painter's power of foreshortening. All the rest of the picture seems painted to spoil this passage of light, for it is all in equal cold pointless daylight, having no reference, nor relation, to the principal light, and the confused and valueless lines of the shipping are unworthy even of Salvator, who usually has some feeling for composition, if for nothing else. The stone pine may be taken as a fair example of the murder of Nature's finest forms, which is so common with him, but his murders are seldom so insipid as this.

"If this picture be bad, however, it is a master-piece compared with the other opposite. I do not believe this to be a Salvator at all, but at any rate, if it be, all the red-bottomed shipping has been repainted by some sign-painter. The hills present caricatures of all Salvator's most gross faults, and the picture possesses no merit whatsoever of any kind."]

[1] [No. 739, "Winter, or the Great Flood."]

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thirteenth centuries, as especially at Chartres). These bands would perhaps be hardly felt as very aqueous, but for the fish, which are interwoven with them in a complicated manner, their heads appearing at one side of every band, and their tails at the other.[1]

Both of these representations of deluge, archaic and rude as they are, I consider better, more suggestive, more inventive, and more natural than Poussin's. Indeed, this is not saying anything very depreciatory, as regards the St. Mark's one; for the glittering of the golden window through the rain is wonderfully well conceived, and almost deceptive, looking as if it had just caught a gleam of sunlight on its panes, and there is something very sublime in the gleam of this light above the floating corpses. But the other instance is sufficiently grotesque and rude, and yet, I speak with perfect seriousness, it is, I think, very far preferable to Poussin's.

On the other hand, there is a just medium between the meanness and apathy of such a conception as his, and the extravagance, still more contemptible, with which the subject has been treated in modern days.* I am not aware that I can refer to any instructive example of this intermediate course; for I fear the reader is by this time wearied of hearing of Turner, and the plate of Turner's picture of the Deluge[2] is so rare that it is of no use to refer to it.

§ 23. Venetians and Florentines. Conclusion.

It seems exceedingly strange that the great Venetian painters should have left us no instance, as far as I know, of any marine effects carefully studied. As already noted (pp. 188, 211), whatever passages of sea occur in their backgrounds are merely broad extents of blue or green surface, fine in colour, and coming

* I am here, of course, speaking of the treatment of the subject as a landscape only; many mighty examples of its conception occur where the sea, and all other adjuncts, are entirely subservient to the figures, as with Raffaelle and M. Angelo.

[1] [For a fuller discussion of "Ancient Representations of Water," see *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. Appendix 21.]

[2] [Now No. 493 in the National Gallery; exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1813; engraved by J. B. Quilley.]

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dark usually against the horizon, well enough to be understood as sea (yet even that not always without the help of a ship), but utterly unregarded in all questions of completion and detail. The water even in Titian's landscape is almost always violently, though grandly, conventional, and seldom forms an important feature. Among the religious schools very sweet motives occur, but nothing which for a moment can be considered as real water-painting. Perugino's sea is usually very beautifully felt; his river in the fresco of Ste Maddalena at Florence[1] is freely indicated, and looks level and clear; the reflections of the trees given with a rapid zigzag stroke of the brush. On the whole, I suppose that the best imitations of level water surface to be found in ancient art are in the clear Flemish landscapes. Cuyp's are usually very satisfactory; but even the best of these attain nothing more than the agreeable suggestion of calm pond or river. Of any tolerable representation of water in agitation, or under any circumstances that bring out its power and character, I know no instance; and the more capable of noble treatment the subject happens to be, the more manifest invariably is the painter's want of feeling in every effort, and of knowledge in every line.

[The following is the version of this chapter from § 4 to the end, as it stood in eds. 1 and 2:—]

We must first state a few of the constant and most important laws which regulate the appearance of water under all circumstances. They are not dependent merely on experience or observation, but are all demonstrable from the mechanical properties of water and light.

§ 4. General rules which regulate the phenomena of water. First, its universality of reflection.

I. Nothing can hinder water from being a reflecting medium, but dry dust or filth of some kind on its surface. Dirty water, if the foul matter be dissolved or suspended in the liquid, reflects just as clearly and sharply as pure water, only the image is coloured by the hue of the mixed matter, and becomes comparatively brown, or dark.[2]

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[1] [Perugino's frescoes are in the Chapter-house of S. Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi. The landscape here noticed is described at greater length in the next volume, sec. ii. ch. v. § 11.]

[2] [(Note in ed. 2, only).—"Brown, as in the case of mountain waters coloured by morasses; or dark, as in lowland estuaries fouled with fine soluble mud. If the foul

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II. If water be rippled, the side of every ripple next to us reflects a piece of the sky, and the side of every ripple farthest from us reflects a piece of the opposite shore, or of whatever objects may be beyond the ripple. But as we soon lose sight of the farther sides of the ripples on the retiring surface, the whole rippled space will then be reflective of the sky only. Thus, where calm distant water receives reflections of high shores, every extent of rippled surface appears as a bright line interrupting that reflection with the colour of the sky.

§ 5. *How modified by ripple.*

III. When a ripple or swell is seen at such an angle as to afford a view of its farther side, it carries the reflection of objects farther down than calm water would. Therefore all motion in water elongates reflections, and throws them into confused vertical lines.

§ 6. *How prolonged and broken.*

IV. Rippled water, of which we can see the farther side of the waves, will reflect a perpendicular line clearly, a bit of its length being given on the side of each wave, and easily joined by the eye. But if the line slope, its reflection will be excessively confused and disjointed, and if horizontal, nearly invisible.

V. Every reflection is the image of the reverse of just so much of the objects beside the water, as we could see if we were placed as much under the level of the water as we are actually above it. [We cannot see the reflection of the top of a flat stone, because we could not see the real top of the stone if we were under the level of the water; and][1] if an object be so far back from the bank, that if we were five feet under the water level we could not see it over the bank, then, standing five feet above the water, we shall not be able to see its image under the reflected bank.

§ 7. *How changed in relation of parts.*

VI. But if the object subtend the proper angle for reflection it does not matter how great its distance may be. The image of a mountain fifty miles off is as clear, in proportion to the clearness of the mountain itself, as the image of a stone on the beach, in proportion to the clearness of the stone itself.

§ 8. *Not affected by distance.*

VII. There is no shadow on clean[2] water. Every darkness on it is reflection, not shadow. If it have rich colouring matter suspended in it, or a dusty surface, it will take a feeble shadow, and where there is even very faint and variable[3] positive colour, as in the sea, it will take something like shadows in distant effect, but never near. Those parts of the sea which appear bright in sunshine, as opposed to other parts, are composed of waves of which every one conveys to the eye a little image of the sun, but which are not themselves illumined in doing so, for the light on the wave depends on your position, and moves as you move; it cannot, therefore, be positive light on the object, for you will not get the light to move off the trunk of a tree because you move away from it. The horizontal

§ 9. *Water receives no shadow.*

matter [misprinted "water" in ed. 2] be insoluble, as when streams are charged with sand or yellow alluvial soil, the reflection is paled and nearly destroyed by its prevalent colour, *beneath* the eye, while it remains clear at a distance from the eye. For full explanation of this and other phenomena of water, especially of rule vii., *vide* Rippingille's *Artist and Amateur's Magazine* for November 1843." (Here reprinted in Appendix ii. pp. 655–661.)

[1] [Bracketed matter omitted in ed 2.]

[2] [*Sic* in eds. 1 and 2; the author probably wrote "clear."]

[3] [Ed. 2 omits "a feeble" and reads: "where it has itself a positive," etc.]

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lines, therefore, cast by clouds on the sea, are not shadows, but reflections.[1] Optical effects of great complication take place by means of refraction and mirage, but it may be taken for granted that if ever there is a real shadow, it is cast on mist, and not on water. And on clear water, near the eye, there never can be even the appearance of a shadow, except a delicate tint on the foam, or transmitted through the body of the water, as through air.[2]

§ 10. Works of Canaletti. His management of ripple equally false in near water,

These rules are universal and incontrovertible. Let us test by them some of the simplest effects of ancient art. Among all the pictures of Canaletti which I have ever seen, and they are not few, I remember but one or two where there is any variation from one method of treatment of the water. He almost always covers the whole space of it with one monotonous ripple, composed of a coat of well chosen, but perfectly opaque and smooth sea-green, covered with a certain number, I cannot state the exact average, but it varies from three hundred and fifty to four hundred and upwards, according to the extent of canvas to be covered, of white concave touches, which are very properly symbolical of ripple. On the water so prepared, he fixes his gondolas in very good perspective, and thus far no objection is to be made to the whole arrangement. But a gondola, as everybody knows, is a very long, shallow boat, little raised above the water, except at the extremities, but having a vertical beak, and rowed by two men, or sometimes only one, *standing*. Consequently, wherever the water is rippled, as by Canaletti, we have, by our fourth rule, only a broken and indistinct image of the horizontal and oblique lines of the gondola, but a tolerably clear one of the vertical beak, and the figures, shooting down a long way under or along the water. What does Canaletti give us? A clear, dark, unbroken reflection of the whole boat, *except* the beak and the figure, which cast none at all. A worthy beginning.

§ 11. And in distant.

Next, as the canal retires back from the eye, Canaletti very properly and geometrically diminishes the size of his ripples, until he arrives at an even field of apparently smooth water. Now, by our second rule, this rippling water, . . . [as in the text above, § 18, p. 513] . . . reflected as clear and sharp as in a quiet lake. Exemplary Canaletti!

§ 12. He erred not from ignorance, but impotence.

Observe, I do not suppose Canaletti, frequently as he must have been afloat on these canals, to have been ignorant of their everyday appearance. I believe him to be a shameless asserter of whatever was most convenient to him; and the convenience of this, his scientific arrangement, is indisputable. For in the first place, it is one of the most difficult things in the world . . . [as in the text above, § 18, p. 514] . . . as the ripple would have been far off. It is a very nervous thing for an ignorant artist* to have a great space of vacant

* The exquisite accuracy of Canaletti's imitations of chiaroscuro in architecture is no degree prove [*sic*] him an artist. Any mechanic can imitate what is quiet and finite. It is only when we have motion and infinity, as in water, that the real powers of an artist are tried. We have already seen that Canaletti could not give the essential truths—the infinite, that is to say—even of architecture; and the moment he touches any higher subject his impotence is made manifest.

[1] [See Ruskin's reply to criticisms of this passage, Appendix ii. p. 656.]
[2] [Ed. 1 omits the words "or transmitted . . . through air.]

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smooth water to deal with, close to him, too far down to take reflections from buildings, and yet which must be made to look flat and retiring and transparent. Canaletti, with his sea-green . . . [as in the text above, § 18, p. 514] . . . trusting to the inaccuracy of observation of the public to secure him from detection. And he has not reckoned without his host.

§ 13. *His falseness of colour.*

Now, what possibly can be expected from any part of the works of a man who is either thus blind to the broadest facts, perpetually before his eyes, or else who sits down to try how much convenient lying the public can digest? It would be but wasted time to look in him for finer truth, when he thus starts in direct defiance of the most palpable. But if it be remembered that . . . [as in the text above, § 19, p. 515] . . . the truths of colour are contradicted by Canaletti by the thousand, not less fatally, though, of course, less demonstrably, than in the broad cases presented by his general arrangement.

§ 14. *Illustration from Turner of the truth.*

I shall not insult any of the works of modern art by comparing them with this, but I may as well illustrate, from a vignette of Turner, the particular truth in the drawing of rippled water of which we have been speaking. There is a ripple in the "Venice," given among the illustrations to Scott's works,[1] on which we see that the large black gondola on the right casts but a faint reflection from its body, while the upward bend of the beak throws a long and decided one. The upright figures on the left cast white light on the water, but the boat in which they are standing has no reflection except at the beak, and there a dark one. The two behind show the same thing.

§ 15. *The calms of Vandevelde.*

Let us next look at a piece of calm water by Vandevelde, such as that marked 113 in the Dulwich Gallery.[2] There is not a line of ripple or swell in any part of this sea; it is absolutely windless. Nothing can prevent the sea, when in such a state as this, from receiving reflections, because it is too vast and too frequently agitated to admit of anything like dry dust or scum on its surface, and however foul or thick a Dutch sea may be in itself, no *internal* filth can ever take away the polish and reflective power of the surface. Nor does Vandevelde appear to suppose it can, for the near boat casts its image with great fidelity, which being unprolonged downwards, informs us that the calm is perfect. But what is that underneath the vessel on the right? A grey shade, descending like smoke a little way below the hull, not of the colour of the hull, having no drawing nor detail in any part of it, and breaking off immediately, leaving the masts and sails totally unrecorded in the water. We have here two kinds of falsehood. First, while the ship is nearly as clear as the boats, the reflection of the ship is a mere mist. This is false by Rule VI. Had the ship been misty, its shadow might have been so; not otherwise. Secondly, the reflection of the hull would in nature have been as deep as the hull is high (or, had there been the slightest swell on the water, deeper), and the masts and sails would all have been rendered with fidelity, especially their vertical lines. Nothing could by any possibility have prevented their being so, but so much swell on the sea as would have prolonged the hull indefinitely. Hence, both the colour and the form of Vandevelde's reflection are impossible.

§ 16. *Their various violations of natural laws.*

[1] [In vol. x. of the *Prose Works* (1834).]

[2] [Now No. 68, "A Calm"; see above, § 17, p. 512, and below, p. 541.]

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Here again, as in the case of Canaletti, I do not suppose Vandevelde to have been ignorant of these common truths; but purposely and wilfully to have denied them, because he did not know how to manage, and was afraid of them. He evidently desired to give an impression of great extent of surface between the boat and the ship, and thought that if he gave the reflection the eye would go under the water instead of along it; and that, as the tops of the masts would come down to the nearest part of the surface, they would destroy the evidence of distance, and appear to set the ship *above* the boat instead of *beyond* it. And I doubt not, in such awkward hands, that such would indeed have been the case. I think he estimated his own powers with great accuracy and correctness, but he is not on that account to be excused for casting defiance in the teeth of nature, and painting his surface with grey horizontal lines, as is done by nautically disposed children; for no destruction of distance in the ocean is so serious a loss as that of its liquidity. It is better to feel a want of extent in the sea, than an extent which we might walk upon or play at billiards upon. And though Vandevelde's eye and feeling were too blunt to suffer much pain from his wilful libelling of nature, he ought not to have reckoned so boldly upon general blindness. Unobservant eyes may, indeed, receive almost any degree of error for truth, under particular circumstances; but I cannot believe that any person who has ever floated on calm sea, can stand before this picture without feeling that the whole of the water below the large ship looks like vapour or smoke. He may not know why, he may not miss the reflection, nor expect it, but he *must* feel that something is wrong, and that the image before him is indeed "a painted ship—upon a painted ocean."[1] Perhaps the best way of educating the eye for the detection of the falsehood is to stand before the mill of Hobbima, No. 131,[2] in which there is a bit of decently painted water, and glance from one picture to the other, when Vandevelde's will soon become by comparison a perfect slate-table, having scarcely even surface or space to recommend it; for, in his ignorance of means to express proximity, the unfortunate Dutchman has been reduced to *blacken* his sea as it comes near, until by the time he reaches the frame it looks perfectly spherical, and is of the colour of ink. What Vandevelde *ought* to have done, and how both the falsehood of his present work, and the destruction of surface which he feared, might have been avoided altogether, I shall show in the third chapter of this section.

§ 17. *Also proceeded from impotence, not from ignorance.*

§ 18. *Their painful effect even on unobservant eyes.*

I might thus proceed through half the pieces of water-painting of the old masters which exist, and point out some new violation of truth, some peculiar arrangement of error, in every one; sometimes indeed, having little influence on the general effect, but always enough to show us that the painter had no real knowledge of his subject, and worked only as an imitator, liable to fall into the most ridiculous mistakes the moment he quitted his model. In the picture of Cuyp, No. 83, Dulwich Galley,[3] it is exceedingly difficult to understand under what kind of moral or intellectual delusion the painter was induced to give the post at the end of the bank on the left, its

§ 19. *Singular mistakes of Cuyp in casting half-a-dozen reflections from one object.*

[1] [*The Ancient Mariner*, part ii.]

[2] [In the Dulwich Gallery, now No. 87: "Woody Landscape with a Large Water-mill"; for other references, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vi. ch. v. § 5, ch. viii. § 12.]

[3] [See above, § 17, p. 511.]

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numerous radiating reflections or shadows; for, in the first place, the sun is not apt to cast half-a-dozen shadows at the same time, neither is water usually disposed to reflect one line in six directions; and, in the second place, supposing that in some melancholy state of bewilderment the painter had supposed these shadows to be indicative of radiating light proceeding from the sun, it is difficult to understand how he could have cast the shadow of the ship in the distance in a line, which, if produced, would cut half of the shadows of the post at right angles. This is a slight passage, and one not likely to attract attention; but I do not know anything more perfectly demonstrative of an artist's entire ignorance. I hope, however, and think it probable—for Cuyp *had* looked at nature, and I can scarcely suppose him capable of committing anything so gross as this—that the shadows of the post may be a picture-dealer's improvement, and that only the one cast by the ship is Cuyp's.

["§ 20. And of Paul Potter, in casting no reflections from half-a-dozen objects." (This section was identical with lines 3–15 on p. 512 above.)]

§ 21. Painting of water in motion. Ruysdael.

We can scarcely expect after finding such errors as these in the painting of ordinary smooth water, to receive much instruction or pleasure from the efforts of the old masters at the more difficult forms and features of water in motion. If, however, all form and feature be abandoned, and falling water be selected at the moment, and under the circumstances when it presents nothing to the eye but a few breaking flakes of foam on the surface of a dark and colourless current, it is then far easier to paint than when it is smooth, and accordingly we find Claude and Poussin succeeding in it well, and throwing a bit of breaking foam over their rocks with good effect; and we find Ruysdael carrying the matter farther, and rendering a low waterfall completely, with great fidelity. It is true that he divests his water of colour, and is often wanting in transparency, but still there is nothing radically wrong in his work, and this is saying much. What falling water may be, and ought to be, we shall see in the following chapter.

§ 22. Painting of rough sea. Vandevelde and Backhuysen.

I wish Ruysdael had painted one or two rough seas.[1] I believe if he had, he might have saved the unhappy public from much grievous victimising, both in mind and pocket, for he would have shown that Vandevelde and Backhuysen were not quite sea-deities. As it is, I believe there is scarcely such another instance to be found in the history of man, of the epidemic aberration of mind into which multitudes fall by infection, as is furnished by the value set upon the works of these men. All others of the ancients have real power of some kind or another, either solemnity of intention, as the Poussins, or refinement of feeling, as Claude, or high imitative accuracy, as Cuyp and Paul Potter, or rapid power of execution, as Salvator; there is something in all which ought to be admired, and of which, if exclusively contemplated, no degree of admiration, however enthusiastic, is unaccountable or unnatural. But Vandevelde and Backhuysen have *no* power, no redeeming quality of mind; their works are neither reflective, nor eclectic, nor imitative; they have neither tone, nor execution, nor colour, nor composition, nor any artistical merit to recommend them; and they present not even a deceptive, much less a real, resemblance of nature. Had they given us staring green seas, with hatchet edges, such as we see "Her Majesty's ships so-and-so" fixed into by the heads or sterns in

[1] [See above, p. 516 *n*.]

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the outer room of the Academy, the thing would have been comprehensible; there is a natural predilection in the mind of man for green waves with curling tops, but not for clay and wool, and the colour, we should have thought, would have been repulsive even to those least cognizant of form. Whatever may be the chilliness, or mistiness, or opacity of a Dutch climate and ocean, there is no water, which has motion in it, and air above it, which ever assumes such a grey as is attributed to sea by these painters; cold and lifeless the general effect may be, but at all times it is wrought out by variety of hue in all its parts; it is a grey caused by coldness of light, not by absence of colour. And how little the authority of these men is worthy of trust in matters of effect, is sufficiently shown by their constant habit of casting a coal-black shadow halfway across the picture on the nearest waves; for, as I have before shown, water itself *never* takes any shadow at all, and the shadow upon foam is so delicate in tint and so broken in form as to be scarcely traceable. The men who could allow themselves to lay a coal-black shadow upon what never takes any shadow at all, and whose feelings were not hurt by the sight of falsehood so distinct, and recoiled not at the shade themselves had made, can be little worthy of credit in anything that they do or assert. Then their foam is either deposited in spherical and tubular concretions, opaque and unbroken, on the surfaces of the waves, or else, the more common case, it is merely the whiteness of the waves shaded gradually off, as if it were the light side of a spherical object, of course representing every breaker as crested, not with spray, but with a puff of smoke. Neither let it be supposed that, in so doing, they had any intention of representing the vaporous spray taken off wild waves by violent wind. That magnificent effect only takes place on large breakers, and has no appearance of smoke except at a little distance; seen near, it is dust. But the Dutch painters cap every little cutting ripple with smoke, evidently intending it for foam, and evidently thus representing it because they had not sufficient power over the brush to produce the broken effect of real spray. Their seas, in consequence, have neither frangibility nor brilliancy; they do not break, but evaporate; their foam neither flies, nor sparkles, nor springs, nor wreathes, nor curdles, nay, it is not even white, nor has the effect of white, but of a dirty efflorescence or exhalation, and their ships are inserted into this singular sea with peculiar want of truth; for, in nature, three circumstances contribute to disguise the waterline upon the wood;—where a wave is thin, the colour of the wood is shown a little through it—when a wave is smooth, the colour of the wood is a little reflected upon it; and when a wave is broken, its foam more or less obscures and modifies the line of junction; besides which, the wet wood itself catches some of the light and colour of the sea. Instead of this, the waterline of the Dutch vessels is marked clear and hard all round; the water reflecting nothing, showing nothing through it, and equally defined in edge of foam as in all other parts. Finally, the curves of their waves are not curves of *projection*, which all sea lines are, but the undulating lines of ropes, or other tough and connected bodies. Whenever two curves, dissimilar in their nature, meet in the sea, of course they both break, and form an edge; but every kind of curve, catenary or conic, is associated by these painters in most

§ 23. *Their errors of colour and shadow,*

§ 24. *And powerless efforts in rendering spray.*

§ 25. *Their impossible insertion of vessels,*

§ 26. *And impossible curves of surge.*

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admired disorder, joined indiscriminately by their extremities. This is a point, however, on which it is impossible to argue, without going into high mathematics, and even then the nature of particular curves, as given by the brush, would be scarcely demonstrable; and I am the less disposed to take much trouble about it because I think that the persons who are really fond of these works, are almost beyond the reach of argument. I can understand why people like Claude, and perceive much in their sensations which is right and legitimate, and which can be appealed to, and I can give them credit for perceiving more in him than I am at present able to perceive; but when I hear of persons *honestly* admiring Backhuysen or Vandevelde, I think there must be something physically wrong or wanting in their perceptions. At least, I can form no estimate of what their notions or feelings are, and cannot hope for anything of principle or opinion common between us, which I can address or understand.

§ 27. The seas of Claude. Their truthfulness.

The seas of Claude are the finest pieces of water painting in ancient art. I do not say that I like them because they appear to me selections of the particular moment when the sea is most insipid and characterless; but I think that they are exceedingly true to the forms and time selected, or at least that the fine instances of them are so, of which there are exceedingly few.[1] Anything and everything is fathered upon him, and he probably committed many mistakes himself, and was occasionally right rather by accident than by knowledge.

Claude and Ruysdael, then, may be considered as the only two men among the old masters who could paint anything like water in extended spaces or in action. The great mass of the landscape painters, though they sometimes succeeded in the imitation of a pond or a gutter, display, whenever they have space or opportunity to do so, want of feeling in every effort, and want of knowledge in every line.

[1] [The passage, "The seas . . . few," occurred also in the third and later editions; see above, § 21, p. 517.]

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CHAPTER II

OF WATER, AS PAINTED BY THE MODERNS

§ 1. General power of the moderns in painting quiet water. The lakes of Fielding.

THERE are few men among modern landscape painters who cannot paint quiet water at least suggestively, if not faithfully.[1] Those who are incapable of doing this would scarcely be considered artists at all; and anything like the ripples of Canaletto, or the black shadows of Vandevelde, would be looked upon as most unpromising, even in the work of a novice. Among those who most fully appreciate and render the qualities of space and surface in calm water, perhaps Copley Fielding stands first. His expanses of windless lake are among the most perfect passages of his works; for he can give surface as well as depth, and make his lake look not only clear, but, which is far more difficult, lustrous. He is less dependent than most of our artists upon reflection; and can give substance, transparency, and extent, where another painter would be reduced to paper; and he is exquisitely refined in his expression of distant breadth, by the delicate line of ripple interrupting the reflection, and by aërial qualities of colour. Nothing, indeed, can be purer or more refined than his general feeling of lake sentiment, were it not for a want of simplicity, a fondness for pretty, rather than impressive colour, and a consequent want of some of the higher expression of repose.[2]

Hundreds of men might be named, whose works are highly

[1] [For "suggestively, if not faithfully," eds. 1 and 2 read, "respectably and faithfully, if not beautifully."]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 add :—

"He is a little apt to mistake the affected for the poetical. Some of his evening passages of seashore with calm sea, are very perfect; and he is peculiarly daring and successful in the treatment of extensive rippled surface."]

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instructive in the management of calm water.[1] Stand for half an hour beside the Fall of Schaffhausen, on the north side where the rapids are long, and watch how the vault of water first bends, unbroken, in pure polished velocity, over the arching rocks at the brow of the cataract, covering them with a dome of crystal twenty feet thick, so swift that its motion is unseen except when a foam-globe from above darts over it like a falling star; and how the trees are lighted above it under all their leaves, at the instant that it breaks into foam;[2] and how all the hollows of that foam burn with green fire like so much shattering

§ 2. The character of bright and violent falling water,

[1] [Eds. 1–4 entitle this section, "§ 2. The calm rivers of De Wint, J. Holland," etc., and read :—

"Hundreds . . . calm water. De Wint is singularly powerful and certain, exquisitely bright, and vigorous in colour. The late John Varley produced some noble passages. I have seen, some seven years ago, works by J. Holland, which were, I think, as near perfection as watercolour can be carried—for *bonâ fide* truth, refined and finished to the highest degree. [But he has since that time produced worse pictures every year; and his fate appears irrecoverable, unless by a very strong effort and a total change of system. I need scarcely refer to the calms of Stanfield and Callcott; of whose excellence it is better to say nothing than little. I only wish that they both, especially the latter, would be a little less cold.]*

"[§ 3. The character of bright, and violent, falling water.] But the power of modern artists is not brought out until they have greater difficulties to struggle with. Stand for half an hour," etc.

* Eds. 3 and 4 omit the passage bracketed above. For De Wint, see above, p. 199 *n.*, and *cf.* pp. 275 *n.*, 397, 445, 535; for Varley, p. 275 *n.* James Holland (1800-1870) was a member of the Society of British Artists and also of the Old Water-Colour Society; drawings by him may be seen in the Victoria and Albert (South Kensington) Museum. He also painted in oils, and two of his pictures are in the Tate Gallery. In a letter to his father (Faido, Aug. 15, 1845) Ruskin refers to Holland's reception of his criticisms :—

"Poor Holland writes singularly good-humouredly, for I was very hard upon him. I hope he will enable me to treat him more kindly after this; he has the power, but he seems to me to be a little too self-taught and to want discipline."

It will be seen that ultimately Ruskin deleted his criticisms.]

[2] [This section, from "Stand for half an hour" to "purple and silver," is § 29 in *Frondes Agrestes*, where at this point Ruskin inserted the following note :—

"Well noticed. The drawing of the fall of Schaffhausen, which I made at the time of writing this study, was one of the very few, either by other draughtsmen or myself, which I have seen Turner pause at with serious attention."

The drawing by Ruskin was No. 28 in the American exhibition arranged by Professor C. E. Norton in 1879. In the catalogue the following "extract from letter, 1874," was given :—

"That drawing of the falls of Schaffhausen is the only one of mine I ever saw Turner interested in. He looked at it long, evidently with pleasure, and shook his finger at it one evening, standing by the fire in the old Denmark Hill drawing-room. How destiny does mock us! Fancy if I had him to shake fingers at me now!"]

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chrysoprase; and how, ever and anon, startling you with its white flash, a jet of spray leaps hissing out of the fall, like a rocket, bursting in the wind and driven away in dust, filling the air with light; and how, through the curdling wreaths of the restless crashing abyss below, the blue of the water, paled by the foam in its body, shows purer than the sky through white rain-cloud; while the shuddering iris stoops in tremulous stillness over all, fading and flushing alternately through the choking spray and shattered sunshine, hiding itself at last among the thick golden leaves which toss to and fro in sympathy with the wild water; their dripping masses lifted at intervals, like sheaves of loaded corn, by some stronger gush from the cataract, and bowed again upon the mossy rocks as its roar dies away; the dew gushing from their thick branches through drooping clusters of emerald herbage, and sparkling in white threads along the dark rocks of the shore, feeding the lichens which chase and chequer them with purple and silver. I believe, when you have stood by this for half an hour, you will have discovered that there is something more in nature than has been given by Ruysdael. Probably you will not be much disposed to think of any mortal work at the time; but when you look back to what you have seen, and are inclined to compare it with art, you will remember, or ought to remember, Nesfield.[1] He has shown extraordinary feeling, both for the colour and the spirituality of a great waterfall; exquisitely delicate in his management of the changeful veil of spray or mist, just in his curves and contours, and rich in colour,[2] if he would remember that in all

§ 3. *As given by Nesfield.*

[1] [William Andrew Nesfield (1794–1881), as a lieutenant in the army, served in the Peninsular under Wellington. In 1823 he was elected a member of the Water-Colour Society, where he exhibited till 1852, after which time he followed the profession of landscape-gardener. Many of the improvements in the London parks and at Kew were carried out under his direction. For another reference to Nesfield, see below, § 12, p. 536.]

[2] [Eds. 1–4 read :—

"and unequalled in colour, except by Turner. None of our water-colour painters can approach him in the management of the variable hues of clear water over weeded rocks; but his feeling for it often leads him a little too far, and, like Copley Fielding, he loses sight of simplicity and dignity for the sake of delicacy or prettiness. His water-falls are, however, unequalled in their way; and if he would," etc.]

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such scenes there is much gloom as well as much splendour, and relieve the lustre of his attractive passages of colour with more definite and prevalent greys, and give a little more substance to parts of his picture unaffected by spray, his work would be nearly perfect. His seas are also most instructive; a little confused in chiaroscuro, but refined in form and admirable in colour.

§ 4. *The admirable water-drawing of J. D. Harding.*

J. D. Harding is, I think, nearly unequalled in[1] the *drawing* of running water. I do not know what Stanfield would do; I have never seen an important piece of torrent drawn by him; but I believe even he could scarcely contend with the magnificent *abandon* of Harding's brush. There is perhaps nothing which tells more in the drawing of water than decisive and swift execution; for, in a rapid touch the hand naturally falls into the very curve of projection which is the absolute truth; while in slow finish, all precision of curve and character is certain to be lost, except under the hand of an unusually powerful master. But Harding has both knowledge and velocity, and the fall of his torrents is beyond praise; impatient, chafing, substantial, shattering, crystalline, and capricious; full of various form, yet all apparently instantaneous and accidental; nothing conventional, nothing dependent upon parallel lines or radiating curves; all broken up and dashed to pieces over the irregular rock, and yet all in unity of motion. The colour also of his *falling* and bright water is very perfect; but in the dark and level parts of his torrents he has employed a cold grey, which has hurt some of his best pictures. His grey in shadows under rocks or dark reflections is admirable; but it is when the stream is in full light, and unaffected by reflections in distance, that he gets wrong. We believe that the fault is in want of expression of darkness in the colour, making it appear like a positive hue of the water, for which it is much too dead and cold.

§ 5. *His colour; and painting of sea.*

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read :—"J. D. Harding is, I think, of all men living, and therefore, certainly, of all who have ever lived, the greatest master in," etc., adding as a footnote, "Turner is an exception to all rules; and whenever I speak generally he is to be considered as such."]

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Harding seldom paints sea, and it is well for Stanfield that he does not, or the latter would have to look to his crown. All that we have seen from his hand is, as coast sea, quite faultless; we only wish he would paint it more frequently; always, however, with a veto upon French fishing-boats. In the Exhibition of 1842,[1] he spoiled one of the most superb pieces of sea-shore and sunset which modern art has produced, with the pestilent square sail of one of these clumsy craft, from which the eye could not escape.

§ 6. *The sea of Copley Fielding. Its exceeding grace and rapidity.*

Before passing to our great sea-painter, we must again refer to the works of Copley Fielding. It is with his sea as with his sky, he can only paint one, and that an easy one, but it is, for all that, an impressive and a true one.[2] No man has ever given, with the same flashing freedom, the race of a running tide under a stiff breeze; nor caught, with the same grace and precision, the curvature of the breaking wave, arrested or accelerated by the wind. The forward fling of his foam, and the impatient run of his surges, whose quick redoubling dash we can almost hear as they break in their haste upon their own bosoms, are nature itself; and his sea grey or green was, nine years ago, very right as colour, always a little wanting in transparency, but never cold or toneless. Since that time, he seems to have lost the sense of greenness in water, and has verged more and more on the purple and black, with unhappy results. His sea was always dependent for effect on its light or dark relief against the sky, even when it possessed colour; but it now has lost local colour and transparency together, and is little more than a study of chiaroscuro.[3]

There is indeed one point in all his seas deserving especial praise, a marked aim at *character*. He desires, especially in

[1] [No. 70 in the Old Water-Colour Society's Exhibition of that year: "Hastings Beach—Sunset."]

[2] [See above, pt. ii. sec. iii. ch. iv. §§ 8–10, pp. 398–9.]

[3] [Eds. 1, 2, and 3 read :—

"study of chiaroscuro in an exceedingly ill-chosen grey. Besides, the perpetual repetition of the same idea is singularly weakening to the mind. Fielding, in all his life, can only be considered as having produced *one* sea

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his latter works, not so much to produce an agreeable picture, a scientific piece of arrangement, or delightful melody of colour, as to make us feel the utter desolation, the cold, withering, frozen hopelessness of the continuous storm and merciless sea. And this is peculiarly remarkable in his denying himself all colour, just in the little bits which an artist of inferior mind would paint in sienna and cobalt. If a piece of broken wreck is allowed to rise for an instant through the boiling foam, though the blue stripe of a sailor's jacket, or a red rag of a flag would do all our hearts good, we are not allowed to have it; it would make us too comfortable, and prevent us from shivering and shrinking as we look; and the artist, with admirable intention and most meritorious self-denial, expresses his piece of wreck with a dark cold brown. Now we think this aim and effort worthy of the very highest praise, and we only wish the lesson were taken up and acted on by our other artists; but Mr. Fielding should remember that nothing of this kind can be done with success unless by the most studied management of the general tones of the picture; for the eye, deprived of all means of enjoying the grey hues, merely as a contrast to bright points, becomes painfully fastidious in the quality of the hues themselves, and demands for its satisfaction such melodies and richness of grey, as may in some degree atone to it for the loss of points of stimulus. That grey which would be taken frankly and freely for an expression of gloom, if it came behind a yellow sail or a red cap, is examined with invidious and merciless intentness when there is nothing to relieve it; and, if not able to bear the investigation, if neither agreeable nor variable in its hue, renders the picture weak instead of impressive, and unpleasant instead of awful. And indeed the management of nature might teach him this; for though, when using violent contrasts,

§ 7. Its high aim at character;

§ 8. But deficiency in the requisite quality of greys.

picture. The others are duplicates. He ought to go to some sea of perfect clearness and brilliant colour, as that on the coast of Cornwall or of the Gulf of Geneva, and study it sternly in broad daylight, with no black clouds or drifting rain to help him out of his difficulties. He would then both learn his strength and add to it."

"[§ 8. Its high aim at character.] But there is one point," etc.]

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she frequently makes her gloom somewhat monotonous, the moment she gives up her vivid colour, and depends upon her desolation, that moment she begins to steal the greens into her sea-grey, and the browns and yellows into her cloud-grey, and the expression of variously tinted light through all. The Land's End,[1] and Lowestoft, and Snowstorm (in the Academy, 1842)[2] of Turner are nothing more than passages of the most hopeless, desolate, uncontrasted greys, and yet are three of the very finest pieces of colour that have come from his hand. And we sincerely hope that Mr. Fielding will gradually perceive the necessity of such studied melodies of quiet colour, and will neither fall back into the old tricks of contrast, nor continue to paint with purple and ink. If he would only make a few careful studies of grey from the mixed atmosphere of spray, rain, and mist of a gale that has been three days hard at work; not of a rainy squall, but of a persevering and powerful storm, and not where the sea is turned into milk and magnesia by a chalk coast, but where it breaks pure and green on grey slate or white granite, as along the cliffs of Cornwall; we think his pictures would present some of the finest examples of high intention and feeling to be found in modern art.

§ 9. Variety of the greys of nature.

The works of Stanfield evidently, and at all times, proceed from the hand of a man who has both thorough knowledge of his subject, and thorough acquaintance with all the means and principles of art. We never criticise them; because we feel, the moment we look carefully at the drawing of any single wave, that the knowledge possessed by the master is much greater than our own; and therefore believe that if anything offends us in any part of the work, it is nearly certain to be our fault, and not the painter's. The local colour of Stanfield's sea is singularly true and powerful, and entirely independent of any tricks of

§ 10. Works of Stanfield. His perfect knowledge and power;

[1] [Eds. 1, 2, and 3 read: "Nor is Mr. Fielding without a model in art, for the 'Land's End' . . ."]

[2] [The "Land's End" (drawing) is the "Longships Lighthouse, Land's End": see below, p. 566. "Lowestoft" is engraved in No. 22 of *England and Wales*. The "Snowstorm" is No. 530 in the National Gallery: see below, p. 571 *n.*]

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chiaroscuro. He will carry a mighty wave up against the sky, and make its whole body dark and substantial against the distant light, using all the while nothing more than chaste and unexaggerated local colour to gain the relief. His surface is at once lustrous, transparent, and accurate to a hair's-breadth in every curve; and he is entirely independent of dark skies, deep blues, driving spray, or any other means of concealing want of form, or atoning for it. He fears no difficulty, desires no assistance, takes his sea in open daylight, under general sunshine, and paints the *element* in its pure colour and complete forms. But we wish that he were less powerful, and more interesting; or that he were a little less Diogenes-like, and did not scorn all that he does not want. Now that he has shown us what he can do without such aids, we wish he would show us what he can do with them. He is, as we have already said, wanting in what we have just been praising in Fielding, impressiveness. We should like him to be less clever, and more affecting; less wonderful, and more terrible; and, as the very first step towards such an end, to learn how to conceal.[1] We are, however, trenching upon matters with which we have at present nothing to do; our concern is now only with truth, and one work of Stanfield alone presents us with as much concentrated knowledge of sea and sky, as, diluted, would have lasted any one of the old masters his life. And let it be especially observed, how extensive and how various is the truth of our modern masters; how it comprises a complete history of that nature, of which, from the ancients, you only here and there can catch a stammering descriptive syllable; how Fielding has given us every character of the quiet lake, Robson * of the mountain tarn, De Wint

§ 11. *But want of feeling.*

§ 12. *General sum of truth presented by modern art.*

* I ought before to have alluded to the works of the late G. Robson. They are somewhat feeble[2] in execution, but there is a feeling of the character of *deep* calm water in them quite unequalled, and different from the works and thoughts of all other men.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read: "to learn what is now in *his* art the one thing wanting—how to conceal."]

[2] [Eds. 1–4, "a little disagreeable." For Robson, see above, p. 193 *n.*]

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of the lowland river, Nesfield of the radiant cataract, Harding of the roaring torrent, Fielding of the desolated sea, Stanfield of the blue, open, boundless ocean. Arrange all this in your mind, observe the perfect truth of it in all its parts, compare it with the fragmentary falsities of the ancients, and then come with me to Turner.

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CHAPTER III

OF WATER, AS PAINTED BY TURNER

I BELIEVE it is a result of the experience of all artists, that it is the easiest thing in the world to give a certain degree of depth and transparency to water; but that it is next to impossible, to give a full impression of surface. If no reflection be given, a ripple being supposed, the water looks like lead: if reflection be given, it, in nine cases out of ten, looks *morbidly* clear and deep, so that we always go down *into* it, even when the artist most wishes us to glide *over* it. Now, this difficulty arises from the very same circumstance which occasions the frequent failure in effect of the best-drawn foregrounds, noticed in Section II. Chapter IV.,[1] the change, namely, of focus necessary in the eye in order to receive rays of light coming from different distances. Go to the edge of a pond in a perfectly calm day, at some place where there is duckweed floating on the surface, not thick, but a leaf here and there. Now, you may either see in the water the reflection of the sky, or you may see the duckweed; but you cannot, by any effort, see both together. If you look for the reflection, you will be sensible of a sudden change or effort in the eye, by which it adapts itself to the reception of the rays which have come all the way from the clouds, have struck on the water, and so been sent up again to the eye. The focus you adopt is one fit for great distance; and, accordingly, you will feel that you are looking down a great way under the water, while the leaves of the duckweed, though they lie upon the water at the very spot on which you are gazing so intently, are

§ 1. The difficulty of giving surface to smooth water.

§ 2. Is dependent on the structure of the eye, and the focus by which the reflected rays are perceived.

[1] [Pp. 320–321.]

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felt only as a vague uncertain interruption, causing a little confusion in the image below, but entirely undistinguishable as leaves, and even their colour unknown and unperceived. Unless you think of them, you will not even feel that anything interrupts your sight, so excessively slight is their effect. If, on the other hand, you make up your mind to look for the leaves of the duckweed, you will perceive an instantaneous change in the effort of the eye, by which it becomes adapted to receive near rays, those which have only come from the surface of the pond. You will then see the delicate leaves of the duckweed with perfect clearness, and in vivid green; but, while you do so, you will be able to perceive nothing of the reflections in the very water on which they float, nothing but a vague flashing and melting of light and dark hues, without form or meaning, which to investigate, or find out what they mean or are, you must quit your hold of the duckweed, and plunge down.

§ 3. *Morbid clearness occasioned in painting of water by distinctness of reflections.*

Hence it appears, that whenever we see plain reflections of comparatively distant objects, in near water, we cannot possibly see the surface, and *vice versâ;* so that when in a painting we give the reflections with the same clearness with which they are visible in nature, we presuppose the effort of the eye to look under the surface, and, of course, destroy the surface, and induce an effect of clearness[1] which, perhaps, the artist has not particularly wished to attain, but which he has found himself forced into, by his reflections, in spite of himself. And the reason of this effect of clearness appearing preternatural is, that people are not in the habit of looking at water with the distant focus adapted to the reflections, unless by particular effort. We invariably, under ordinary circumstances, use the surface focus; and, in consequence, receive nothing more than a vague and confused impression of the reflected colours and lines, however clearly,

[1] [For "induce an effect of clearness which, perhaps, the artist," eds. 1 and 2 read:—

"make everybody inclined to cry out—the moment they come before the picture—'Dear me, what excessively *clear* water!' when, perhaps, in a lowland study, clearness is not a quality which the artist," etc.]

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calmly, and vigorously all may be defined underneath, if we choose to look for them. We do not look for them, but glide along over the surface, catching only playing light and capricious colour for evidence of reflection, except where we come to images of objects close to the surface, which the surface focus is of course adapted to receive; and these we see clearly, as of the weeds on the shore, or of sticks rising out of the water, etc. Hence, the ordinary[1] effect of water is only to be rendered by giving the reflections of the *margin* clear and distinct (so clear they usually are in nature, that it is impossible to tell where the water begins); but the moment we touch the reflection of distant objects, as of high trees or clouds, that instant we must become vague and uncertain in drawing, and, though vivid in colour and light as the object itself, quite indistinct in form and feature. If we take such a piece of water as that in the foreground of Turner's Château of Prince Albert,[2] the first impression from it is, "What a wide *surface!*" We glide over it a quarter of a mile into the picture before we know where we are, and yet the water is as calm and crystalline as a mirror; but we are not allowed to tumble into it, and gasp for breath as we go down, we are kept upon the surface, though that surface is flashing and radiant with every hue of cloud, and sun, and sky, and foliage. But the secret is in the drawing of these reflections.* We cannot tell, when we look

§ 4. *How avoided by Turner.*

* Not altogether. I believe here, as in a former case, I have attributed far too much influence to this change of focus. In Turner's earlier works the principle is not found. In the rivers of the Yorkshire drawings, every reflection is given clearly, even to the farthest depth, and yet the surface is not lost, and it would deprive the painter of much power if he were not sometimes so to represent them, especially when his object is repose; it being, of course, as lawful for him to choose one adaptation of the sight as another. I have, however, left the above paragraphs as first written, because they are true, although I think they make too much of an unimportant matter. The reader may attribute to them such weight as he thinks fit. He is referred to § 11 of this chapter, and to § 4 of the first chapter of this section.[3]

[1] [For "ordinary," eds. 1 and 2 read, "right and natural."]

[2] ["Rosenau: seat of H.R.H. Prince Albert, near Coburg, Germany," exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1841; now in the collection of Mrs. George Holt; engraved in vol. ii. of *Turner and Ruskin*.]

[3] [Note first added in the 3rd ed.]

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at them and *for* them, what they mean. They have all character, and are evidently reflections of something definite and determined; but yet they are all uncertain and inexplicable; playing colour and palpitating shade, which, though we recognize them in an instant for images of something, and feel that the water is bright, and lovely, and calm, we cannot penetrate nor interpret; we are not allowed to go down to them, and we repose, as we should in nature, upon the lustre of the level surface. It is in this power of saying everything, and yet saying nothing too plainly, that the perfection of art here, as in all other cases, consists. But, as it was before shown in Sec. II. Chap. IV. that the focus of the eye required little alteration after the first half-mile of distance, it is evident that on the *distant* surface of water, *all* reflections will be seen plainly; for the same focus adapted to a moderate distance of surface will receive with distinctness rays coming from the sky, or from any other distance, however great. Thus we always see the reflection of Mont Blanc on the Lake of Geneva, whether we take pains to look for it or not, because the water upon which it is cast is itself a mile off; but if we would see the reflection of Mont Blanc in the Lac de Chède, which is close to us,[1] we must take some trouble about the matter, leave the green snakes swimming upon the surface, and plunge for it. Hence reflections, if viewed collectively, are always clear in

§ 5. All reflections on distant water are distinct.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add a footnote :—

"The 'Lac de Chède' *was* (alas for the word! it was destroyed by an éboulement three years ago), to my mind, the loveliest thing in Switzerland; a pool of emerald water, clearer than the mountain air around it, and yet greener than the pine boughs whose gloom it imaged, full of bright, forest-like weeds, and peopled by multitudes of lustrous, gliding, innocent serpents, unearthly creatures, which gave it more of the Greek feeling of divinity than is now perhaps left in the whole wide world. It was probably the ground-work of many of Shelley's noblest descriptive passages."

Ruskin was perhaps thinking of passages in *Alastor*, which much resemble this description of the Lac de Chède; but the poem was written in 1815, and Shelley did not visit Chamouni till the following year. He does not mention the lake in his *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (reprinted in Mrs. Shelley's edition of his *Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c.* (1840): see in that book, vol. ii. p. 82). Ruskin wrote a description in verse of the lake in his "Journal of a Tour through France to Chamouni, 1835," canto ii. stanzas 21 and 22: see Vol. II. pp. 424–425, and cf. *Ethics of the Dust*, ch. x., and *Deucalion*, i. ch. ii. § 13, where he again refers to the filling up of the lake.]

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proportion to the distance of the water on which they are cast. And now look at Turner's Ulleswater,[1] or any of his distant lake expanses, and you will find every crag and line of the hills rendered in them with absolute fidelity, while the near surface shows nothing but a vague confusion of exquisite and lustrous tint. The reflections even of the clouds will be given far off, while those of near boats and figures will be confused and mixed among each other, except just at the water-line.

§ 6. *The error of Vandevelde.*

And now we see what Vandevelde *ought* to have done with the shadow of his ship spoken of in the first chapter of this section.[2] In such a calm, we should in nature, if we had looked for the reflection, have seen it clear from the water-line to the flag on the mainmast; but, in so doing, we should have appeared to ourselves to be looking under the water, and should have lost all feeling of surface. When we looked at the surface of the sea, we should have seen the image of the hull absolutely clear and perfect, because that image is cast on distant water;[3] but we should have seen the image of the masts and sails gradually more confused as they descended, and the water close to us would have borne only upon its surface a maze of flashing colour and indefinite hue. Had Vandevelde, therefore, given the perfect image of his ship, he would have represented a truth dependent on a particular effort of the eye, and destroyed his surface. But his business was to give, not a distinct reflection, but the colours of the reflection in mystery and disorder upon his near water, all perfectly vivid, but none intelligible: and had he done so, the eye would not have troubled itself to search them out; it would not have cared whence or how the colours came, but it would have felt them to be true and right, and rested satisfied upon the polished surface of the clear sea. Of the

[1] [*England and Wales*, No. 19. For another reference to the drawing, see above, p. 490. The word "Turner's," which is here required, was in eds. 1–4, but omitted in ed. 5 and the 1873 ed.]

[2] [§ 17, p. 512.]

[3] [Eds. 1 and 2 add a footnote :—

"In all this reasoning, I suppose knowledge in the reader of the optical mode in which reflections are produced; otherwise it can scarcely be understood."]

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perfect truth, the best examples I can give are Turner's Saltash, and Castle Upnor.[1]

§ 7. Difference in arrangement of parts between the reflected object and its image,

Be it next observed, that the reflection of all near objects is, by our fifth rule,[2] not an exact copy of the parts of them which we see above the water, but a totally different view and arrangement of them, that which we should get if we were looking at them from beneath. Hence we see the dark sides of leaves hanging over a stream, in their reflection, though we see the light sides above; and all objects and groups of objects are thus seen in the reflection under different lights, and in different positions with respect to each other, from those which they assume above; some which we see on the bank being entirely lost in their reflection, and others which we cannot see on the bank brought into view. Hence nature contrives never to repeat herself, and the surface of water is not a mockery, but a new view of what is above it. And this difference in what is represented, as well as the obscurity of the representation, is one of the chief sources by which the sensation of surface is kept up in the reality. The reflection is not so remarkable, it does not attract the eye in the same degree when it is entirely different from the images above, as when it mocks them and repeats them, and we feel that the space and surface have colour and character of their own, and that the bank is one thing and the water another. It is by not making this change manifest, and giving underneath a mere duplicate of what is seen above, that artists are apt to destroy the essence and substance of water, and to drop us through it.

Now one instance will be sufficient to show the exquisite care of Turner in this respect. On the left-hand side of his Nottingham,[3] the water (a smooth canal) is terminated by a

[1] [In Nos. 3 and 16 of *England and Wales*. For another reference to them, see above, pt. ii. sec. iii. ch. v. § 2 (list).]

[2] [See above, p. 506.]

[3] [*England and Wales*, No. 17. The drawing is figured in vol. iv. ch. ii. of *Modern Painters* (Plate 23), to illustrate "Turnerian Topography." For another reference to it, see above, pt. ii. sec. iii. ch. v. § 2.]

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bank fenced up with wood, on which, just at the edge of the water, stands a white sign-post. A quarter of a mile back, the hill on which Nottingham Castle stands rises steeply nearly to the top of the picture. The upper part of this hill is in bright golden light, and the lower in very deep grey shadow, against which the white board of the sign-post is seen entirely in light relief, though, being turned from the light, it is itself in delicate middle tint, illumined only on the edge. But the image of all this in the canal is very different. First, we have the reflection of the piles of the bank sharp and clear, but under this we have not what we see above it, the dark *base* of the hill (for this being a quarter of a mile back, we could not see it over the fence if we were looking from below), but the golden summit of the hill, the shadow of the under part having no record nor place in the reflection. Now this summit, being very distant, cannot be seen clearly by the eye while its focus is adapted to the surface of the water, and accordingly its reflection is entirely vague and confused; you cannot tell what it is meant for, it is mere playing golden light. But the sign-post, being on the bank close to us, will be reflected clearly, and accordingly its distinct image is seen in the midst of this confusion; relieved, however, not now against the dark base, but against the illumined summit of the hill, and appearing therefore, instead of a white space thrown out from blue shade, a dark grey space thrown out from golden light. I do not know that any more magnificent example could be given of concentrated knowledge, or of the daring statement of most difficult truth. For who but this consummate artist would have had courage, even if he had perceived the laws which required it, to undertake, in a single small space of water, the painting of an entirely new picture, with all its tones and arrangements altered, —what was made above bright by opposition to blue, being underneath made cool and dark by opposition to gold; or would have dared to contradict so boldly the ordinary expectation of the uncultivated eye, to find in the reflection a mockery of the reality? But

§ 8. *Illustrated from the works of Turner.*

§ 9. *The boldness and judgment shown in the observance of it.*

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the reward is immediate, for not only is the change most grateful to the eye, and most exquisite as composition, but the surface of the water in consequence of it is felt to be as spacious as it is clear, and the eye rests not on the inverted image of the material objects, but on the element which receives them. And we have a farther instance in this passage of the close study which is required to enjoy the works of Turner, for another artist might have altered the reflection or confused it, but he would not have reasoned upon it so as to find out *what the exact alteration must be;* and if we had tried to account for the reflection, we should have found it false or inaccurate. But the master mind of Turner, without effort, showers its knowledge into every touch, and we have only to trace out even his slightest passages, part by part, to find in them the universal working of the deepest thought, that consistency of every minor truth which admits of and invites the same ceaseless study as the work of nature herself.

§ 10. *The texture of surface in Turner's painting of calm water.*

There is, however, yet another peculiarity in Turner's painting of smooth water, which, though less deserving of admiration, as being merely a mechanical excellence, is not less wonderful than its other qualities, nor less unique; a peculiar texture, namely, given to the most delicate tints of the surface, when there is little reflection from anything except sky or atmosphere, and which, just at the points where other painters are reduced to paper, gives to the surface of Turner the greatest appearance of substantial liquidity. It is impossible to say how it is produced; it looks like some modification of body colour; but it certainly is not body colour used as by other men, for I have seen this expedient tried over and over again without success; and it is often accompanied by crumbling touches of a dry brush, which never could have been put upon body colour, and which could not have shown through underneath it. As a piece of mechanical excellence, it is one of the most remarkable things in the works of the master; and it brings the truth of his water-painting up to the last degree of perfection; often rendering those passages of it the

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most attractive and delightful, which, from their delicacy and paleness of tint, would have been weak and papery in the hands of any other man. The best instance of it I can give is, I think, the distance of the Devonport with the Dockyards.[1]

After all, however, there is more in Turner's painting of water surface than any philosophy of reflection, or any peculiarity of means can account for or accomplish; there is a might and wonder about it which will not admit of our whys and hows. Take, for instance, the picture of the Sun of Venice going to Sea, of 1843;[2] respecting which, however, there are one or two circumstances which may as well be noted besides its water-painting. The reader, if he has not been at Venice, ought to be made aware that the Venetian fishing-boats, almost without exception, carry canvas painted with bright colours; the favourite design for the centre being either a cross or a large sun with many rays, the favourite colours being red, orange, and black, blue occurring occasionally. The radiance of these sails and of the bright and grotesque vanes at the mast-heads under sunlight is beyond all painting; but it is strange that, of constant occurrence as these boats are on all the lagoons, Turner alone should have availed himself of them. Nothing could be more faithful than the boat, which was the principal object in this picture, in the cut of the sail, the filling of it, the exact height of the boom above the deck, the quartering of it with colour; finally and especially, the hanging of the fish-baskets about the bows. All these, however, are comparatively minor merits (though not the blaze of colour which the artist elicited from the right use of these circumstances); but the peculiar power of the picture was the painting of the sea surface, where there were no reflections to assist it. A stream of splendid colour fell from the boat, but that occupied the centre only; in the distance the city and crowded boats threw down some playing

§ 11. *Its united qualities.*

[1] [*England and Wales*, No. 8. For other references to the drawing, see above, pp. 266 *n.*, 282 *n.*]

[2] [See above, note, p. 251, for Ruskin's reference to this picture in a letter from Venice (1845). § 11, as it now stands in the text, was added in the 1846 ed., and embodies Ruskin's impressions of 1845.]

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lines, but these still left on each side of the boat a large space of water reflecting nothing but the morning sky. This was divided by an eddying swell, on whose continuous sides the local colour of the water was seen, pure aquamarine (a beautiful occurrence of closely observed truth); but still there remained a large blank space of pale water to be treated, the sky above had no distinct details, and was pure faint grey, with broken white vestiges of cloud; it gave no help therefore. But there the water lay, no dead grey flat paint, but downright clear, playing, palpable surface, full of indefinite hue, and retiring as regularly and visibly back and far away, as if there had been objects all over it to tell the story by perspective. Now it is the doing of this which tries the painter, and it is his having done this which made me say above that "no man had ever painted the surface of calm water but Turner." The San Benedetto, looking towards Fusina, contained a similar passage, equally fine; in one of the Canale della Giudecca[1] the specific green colour of the water is seen in front, with the shadows of the boats thrown on it in purple; all, as it retires, passing into the pure reflective blue.[2]

But Turner is not satisfied with this. He is never altogether content unless he can, at the same time that he takes advantage of all the placidity of repose, tell us something either about the past commotion of the water, or of some

[1] [For the "San Benedetto," see above, note on pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. § 46. "Venice from the Canale della Giudecca," exhibited at the Academy in 1840, is now in the Victoria and Albert (South Kensington) Museum, Sheepshanks' Gift, No 208.]

[2] [This section (§ 11) is shorter and quite different in eds. 1 and 2, which read :—

> "If, then, we consider what will be the effect of the constant observation of all natural laws, down to the most intricate and least apparently important—an observation carried out not merely in large or broad cases, but in every spot or shade of the slightest passages of reflection; if we add to this all that attainment of intricacy and infinity which we have generally described as characteristic of Turner's execution universally; if we suppose, added to this, all that radiance and refinement which we observed to be constant in his colour, brought by the nature of the subject up to their utmost brilliancy and most delicate states of perpetual transition and mystery; if we suppose all this, aided by every mechanical means of giving lustre and light that art can supply, used with the most consummate skill, and if we suppose all this thought, beauty and power applied, manifested and exerted to produce the utmost possible degree of fullness and finish that can be concentrated into given space, we shall have some idea of Turner's painting of calm water universally."]

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present stirring of tide or current which its stillness does not show; or give us something or other to think about and reason upon, as well as to look at. Take a few instances. His Cowes, Isle of Wight,[1] is a summer twilight, about half an hour, or more, after sunset. Intensity of repose is the great aim throughout, and the unity of tone of the picture is one of the finest things that Turner has ever done. But there is not only quietness, there is the very deepest solemnity in the whole of the light, as well as in the stillness of the vessels; and Turner wishes to enhance this feeling by representing not only repose, but *power* in repose, the emblem, in the sea, of the quiet ships of war. Accordingly, he takes the greatest possible pains to get his surface polished, calm, and smooth; but he indicates the reflection of a buoy floating a full quarter of a mile off by three black strokes with wide intervals between them, the last of which touches the water within twenty yards of the spectator. Now these three reflections can only indicate the farther sides of three rises of an enormous swell, and give by their intervals of separation, a space of from twelve to twenty yards for the breadth of each wave, including the sweep between them; and this swell is farther indicated by the reflection of the new moon falling in a wide zigzag line. The exceeding majesty which this single circumstance gives to the whole picture, the sublime sensation of power and knowledge of former exertion which we instantly receive from it, if we have but acquaintance with nature enough to understand its language, render this work not only a piece of the most refined truth (as which I have at present named it), but, to my mind, one of the highest pieces of intellectual art existing.

§ 12. Relation of various circumstances of past agitation, etc., by the most trifling incidents, as in the Cowes;

Again, in the scene on the Loire, with the square precipice and fiery sunset, in the Rivers of France,[2] repose has been

[1] [*England and Wales*, No. 8. For other references to it, see above, pt. ii. sec. ii. ch. i. § 12 (eds. 1 and 2), p. 266, and below, § 15.]

[2] ["Scene on the Loire," Plate No. 61 in *The Seine and the Loire* (ed. M. B. Huish), 1890. The drawing is among those given by Ruskin to his Drawing School at Oxford (see *Catalogue of the Standard Series*, No. 3).]

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aimed at in the same way, and most thoroughly given; but the immense width of the river at this spot makes it look like a lake or sea, and it was therefore necessary that we should be made thoroughly to understand and feel that this is not the calm of still water, but the tranquillity of a majestic current. Accordingly, a boat swings at anchor on the right; and the stream, dividing at its bow, flows towards us in two long, dark waves, especial attention to which is enforced by the one on the left being brought across the reflected stream of sunshine, which is separated and broken by the general undulation and agitation of the water in the boat's wake; a wake caused by the water's passing it, not by *its* going through the water.

§ 13. *In scenes on the Loire and Seine.*

Again, in the Confluence of the Seine and Marne,[1] we have the repose of the wide river stirred by the paddles of the steam-boat, whose plashing we can almost hear; for we are especially compelled to look at them by their being made the central note of the composition—the blackest object in it, opposed to the strongest light. And this disturbance is not merely caused by the two lines of surge from the boat's wake, for any other painter must have given these; but Turner never rests satisfied till he has told you *all* in his power; and he has not only given the receding surges, but these have gone on to the shore, have struck upon it, and been beaten back from it in another line of weaker contrary surges, whose point of intersection with those of the wake itself is marked by the sudden subdivision and disorder of the waves of the wake on the extreme left; and whose reverted direction is exquisitely given where their lines cross the calm water, close to the spectator, and marked also by the sudden vertical spring of the spray just where they intersect the swell from the boat; and in order that we may fully be able to account for these reverted waves, we are allowed, just at the extreme right-hand limit of the picture, to see the point where the swell from the

§ 14. *Expression of contrary waves caused by recoil from shore.*

[1] [Plate No. 38 in *The Seine and the Loire.* "The original drawing was sold at Christie's in 1852 for £42."]

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boat meets the shore.[1] In the Chaise de Gargantua[2] we have the still water, lulled by the dead calm which usually precedes the most violent storms, suddenly broken upon by a tremendous burst of wind from the gathered thunder-clouds, scattering the boats, and raising[3] the water into rage, except where it is sheltered by the hills. In the Jumièges and Vernon[4] we have farther instances of local agitation, caused, in the one case, by a steamer, in the other, by the large water-wheels under the bridge; not, observe, a mere splashing about the wheel itself, this is too far off to be noticeable, so that we should not have ever known that the objects beneath the bridge were water-wheels, but for the agitation recorded a quarter of a mile down the river, where its current crosses the sunlight. And thus there will scarcely ever be found a piece of quiet water by Turner, without some story in it of one kind or another; sometimes a slight but beautiful incident; oftener, as in the Cowes,[5] something on which the whole sentiment and intention of the picture in a great degree depends; but invariably presenting some new instance of varied knowledge and observation, some fresh appeal to the highest faculties of the mind.[6]

§ 15. *Various other instances.*

Of extended surfaces of water, as rendered by Turner, the Loch Katrine and Derwentwater of the Illustrations to Scott, and the Loch Lomond vignette in Rogers's Poems,[7] are

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read:—
"meets the shore. But it is only by persons who have not carefully watched the effect of a steamer's wake when she is running close by shore that the exquisite accuracy with which all this is told and represented is at all appreciable. In the . . ."]

[2] [Plate No. 12 in *The Seine and the Loire.* The original drawing is No. 139 in the National Gallery.]

[3] [Misprinted "razing" in previous eds.]

[4] [Jumièges, Plate No. 11 in *The Seine and the Loire.* The original drawing is No. 155 in the National Gallery; for another reference to it, see above, p. 400. "Vernon," Plate 24 in *The Seine and the Loire;* original drawing, No. 153 in the National Gallery.]

[5] [See above, § 12.]

[6] [Eds. 1 and 2 add:—
"There is always a deep truth, which must be reasoned upon and comprehended in them before their beauty can be felt."]

[7] [At p. 205 of the *Poems;* the original drawing is No. 240 in the National Gallery. Loch Katrine is in vol. viii. of Scott's *Poetical Works;* "Derwentwater" ("Skiddaw") in vol. ii.; for other references, see pp. 315, 421, 467.]

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characteristic instances. The first of these gives us the most distant part of the lake entirely under the influence of a light breeze, and therefore entirely without reflections of the objects on its borders; but the whole near half is untouched by the wind, and on that is cast the image of the upper part of Ben Venue and of the islands. The second gives us the surface, with just so much motion upon it as to prolong, but not to destroy, the reflections of the dark woods, reflections only interrupted by the ripple of the boat's wake. And the third gives us an example of the whole surface so much affected by ripple as to bring into exercise all those laws which we have seen so grossly violated by Canaletto. We see in the nearest boat that though the lines of the gunwale are much blacker and more conspicuous than that of the cutwater, yet the gunwale lines, being nearly horizontal, have no reflection whatsoever; while the line of the cutwater, being vertical, has a distinct reflection of three times its own length. But even these tremulous reflections are only visible as far as the islands; beyond them, as the lake retires into distance, we find it receives only the reflection of the grey light from the clouds, and runs in one flat white field up between the hills; and besides all this, we have another phenomenon, quite new, given to us,—the brilliant gleam of light along the centre of the lake. This is not caused by ripple, for it is cast on a surface rippled all over; but it is what we could not have without ripple,—the light of a passage of sunshine. I have already (Chap. I. § 9) explained the cause of this phenomenon, which never can by any possibility take place on calm water, being the multitudinous reflection of the sun from the sides of the ripples, causing an appearance of local light and shadow; and being dependent, like real light and shadow, on the passage of the clouds, though the dark parts of the water are the reflections of the clouds, not the shadows of them, and the bright parts are the reflections of the sun, and not the light of it. This little vignette, then, will

§ 16. *Turner's painting of distant expanses of water.—Calm, interrupted by ripple;*

§ 17. *And rippled, crossed by sunshine.*

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entirely complete the system of Turner's universal truth in quiet water. We have seen every phenomenon given by him,—the clear reflection, the prolonged reflection, the reflection broken by ripple, and, finally, the ripple broken by light and shade; and it is especially to be observed how careful he is, in this last case, when he uses the apparent light and shade, to account for it by showing us in the whiteness of the lake beyond, its universal subjection to ripple.

§ 18. *His drawing of distant rivers;*

We have not spoken of Turner's magnificent drawing of distant rivers, which, however, is dependent only on more complicated application of the same laws, with exquisite perspective. The sweeps of river in the Dryburgh (Illustrations to Scott) and Melrose are bold and characteristic examples, as well as the Rouen from St. Catharine's Hill, and the Caudebec, in the Rivers of France.[1] The only thing which in these works requires particular attention is, the care with which the height of the observer above the river is indicated by the loss of the reflections of its banks. This is, perhaps, shown most clearly in the Caudebec. If we had been on a level with the river, its whole surface would have been darkened by the reflection of the steep and high banks; but, being far above it, we can see no more of the image than we could of the hill itself, if it were actually reversed under the water; and therefore we see that Turner gives us a narrow line of dark water, immediately under the precipice, the broad surface reflecting only the sky. This is also finely shown on the left-hand side of the Dryburgh.

§ 19. *And of surface associated with mist.*

But all these early works of the artist have been eclipsed by some recent drawings of Switzerland. These latter are not to be described by any words; but they must be noted here, not only as presenting records of lake effect on a grander scale, and of more imaginative character, than any other of his works, but

[1] [For the "Rouen," see above, note, p. 388; for "Caudebec," p. 464. "Dryburgh Abbey" is in vol. v. of Scott's *Poetical Works*; "Melrose," in vol. vi.; for another reference to the latter, see p. 315.]

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as combining effects of the surface of mist with the surface of water. Two or three of the Lake of Lucerne, seen from above, give the melting of the mountain promontories beneath into the clear depth, and above into the clouds; one of Constance shows the vast lake at evening, seen not as water, but its surface covered with low white mist, lying, league beyond league, in the twilight, like a fallen space of moony cloud; one of Goldau shows the Lake of Zug appearing through the chasm of a thunder-cloud under sunset, its whole surface one blaze of fire, and the promontories of the hills thrown out against it like spectres; another of Zurich gives the playing of the green waves of the river among white streams of moonlight; a purple sunset on the Lake of Zug is distinguished for the glow obtained without positive colour, the rose and purple tints being in great measure brought by opposition out of brown; finally, a drawing executed in 1845, of the town of Lucerne from the lake, is unique for its expression of water surface reflecting the clear green hue of sky at twilight.[1]

It will be remembered[2] that it was said above, that Turner was the only painter who had ever represented the surface of calm or the *force* of agitated water. He obtains this

[1] [This section (§ 19), as will be seen from the date 1845, was added in the ed. of 1846. It is shorter and quite different in eds. 1 and 2, which read:—

"Of Turner's more difficult effects of calm surface associated with rising mist, it is impossible to speak partially, we must consider them as associated with effects of light, and many other matters difficult of investigation, only to be judged of by contemplating each picture as a whole. The 'Nemi,' 'Oberwesel,' and 'Ehrenbreitstein' have been already instanced (sec. iii. chap. iv.), the latter being especially remarkable for its expression of water surface, seen not through, but *under* mist. The 'Constance' is a more marvellous example than all, giving the vast lake, with its surface white with level mist, lying league beyond league in the wan twilight, like a fallen space of moony sky."

The "recent drawings of Switzerland" (1842) are described more particularly in the Epilogue to Ruskin's *Notes on his Drawings by Turner*; for other references to them in this volume, see pp. 240, 250; and cf. *Pre-Raphaelitism*, § 50. Constance, Zug, and Goldau were in Ruskin's collection (Nos. 63–65) in the *Notes*. For Goldau and Zug, see also *Modern Painters*, vols. iv. and v. (Plates 50 and 87).]

[2] [The first two sentences of this section ("It will be remembered . . . its forms") run as follows in eds. 1 and 2:—

"But we must pause to observe Turner's victory over greater difficulties. The chief peculiarity about his drawing of falling or running water, is his fearless and full rendering of its *forms*."]

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expression of force in falling or running water by fearless and full rendering of its forms. He never loses himself and his subject in the splash of the fall, his presence of mind never fails as he goes down; he does not blind us with the spray, or veil the countenance of his fall with its own drapery. A little crumbling white, or lightly rubbed paper, will soon give the effect of indiscriminate foam; but nature gives more than foam, she shows beneath it, and through it, a peculiar character of exquisitely studied form bestowed on every wave and line of fall; and it is this variety of definite character which Turner always aims at, rejecting, as much as possible, everything that conceals or overwhelms it. Thus, in the Upper Fall of the Tees,[1] though the whole basin of the fall is blue and dim with the rising vapour, yet the attention of the spectator is chiefly directed to the concentric zones and delicate curves of the falling water itself; and it is impossible to express with what exquisite accuracy these are given. They are the characteristic of a powerful stream descending without impediment or break, but from a narrow channel, so as to expand as it falls. They are the constant form which such a stream assumes as it descends; and yet I think it would be difficult to point to another instance of their being rendered in art. You will find nothing in the waterfalls even of our best painters, but springing lines of parabolic descent, and splashing shapeless foam; and, in consequence, though they may make you understand the swiftness of the water, they never let you feel the weight of it; the stream in their hands looks *active*, not *supine*, as if it leaped, not as if it fell. Now water will leap a little way, it will leap down a weir or over a stone, but it *tumbles* over a high fall like this; and it is when we have lost the parabolic line, and arrived at the catenary, when we have lost the *spring* of the fall, and arrived at the *plunge* of it, that we begin really to feel its weight and wildness. Where water takes its first leap from the top, it is cool,

§ 20. His drawing of falling water, with peculiar expression of weight.

§ 21. The abandonment and plunge of great cataracts, how given by him.

[1] [See above, p. 486.]

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and collected, and uninteresting, and mathematical; but it is when it finds that it has got into a scrape, and has farther to go than it thought, that its character comes out: it is then that it begins to writhe, and twist, and sweep out, zone after zone, in wilder stretching as it falls; and to send down the rocket-like, lance-pointed, whizzing shafts at its sides, sounding for the bottom. And it is this prostration, this hopeless abandonment of its ponderous power to the air, which is always peculiarly expressed by Turner, and especially in the case before us; while our other artists, keeping to the parabolic line, where they do not lose themselves in smoke and foam, make their cataract look muscular and wiry, and may consider themselves fortunate if they can keep it from stopping. I believe the majesty of motion which Turner has given by these concentric catenary lines must be felt even by those who have never seen a high waterfall, and therefore cannot appreciate their exquisite fidelity to nature.

In the Chain Bridge over the Tees,[1] this passiveness and swinging of the water to and fro are yet more remarkable; while we have another characteristic of a great waterfall given to us, that the wind, in this instance coming up the valley against the current, takes the spray up off the edges, and carries it back in little torn, reverted rags and threads, seen in delicate form against the darkness on the left. But we must understand a little more about the nature of running water before we can appreciate the drawing either of this, or any other of Turner's torrents.

§ 22. Difference in the action of water, when continuous and when interrupted. The interrupted stream fills the hollows of its bed;

When water, not in very great body, runs in a rocky bed much interrupted by hollows, so that it can rest every now and then in a pool as it goes along, it does not acquire a continuous velocity of motion. It pauses after every leap, and curdles about, and rests a little and then goes on again; and if in this comparatively tranquil and rational state of mind it meets with any obstacle, as a rock or stone, it parts on each side of it with a little bubbling foam,

[1] [*England and Wales*, No. 24; *cf.* above, p. 489, and below, p. 587.]

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and goes round; if it comes to a step in its bed, it leaps it lightly, and then after a little splashing at the bottom, stops again to take breath. But if its bed be on a continuous slope, not much interrupted by hollows, so that it cannot rest, or if its own mass be so increased by flood that its usual resting-places are not sufficient for it, but that it is perpetually pushed out of them by the following current, before it has had time to tranquillize itself, it of course gains velocity with every yard that it runs;[1] the impetus got at one leap is carried to the credit of the next, until the whole stream becomes one mass of unchecked accelerating motion. Now when water in this state comes to an obstacle, it does not part at it, but clears it, like a race-horse; and when it comes to a hollow, it does not fill it up and run out leisurely at the other side, but it rushes down into it and comes up again on the other side, as a ship into the hollow of the sea. Hence the whole appearance of the bed of the stream is changed, and all the lines of the water altered in their nature. The quiet stream is a succession of leaps and pools; the leaps are light and springy, and parabolic, and make a great deal of splashing when they tumble into the pools; then we have a space of quiet curdling water and another similar leap below. But the stream when it has gained an impetus, *takes the shape* of its bed, goes down into every hollow, not with a leap, but with a swing, not foaming, nor splashing, but in the bending line of a strong sea-wave, and comes up again on the other side, over rock and ridge, with the ease of a bounding leopard; if it meet a rock three or four feet above the level of its bed, it will often neither part nor foam, nor express any concern about the matter, but clear it in a smooth dome of water, without apparent exertion, the whole surface of the surge being drawn into parallel lines by its extreme velocity, so that the whole river has the appearance of a deep and raging sea, with this only difference,

§ 23. *But the continuous stream takes the shape of its bed.*

[1] [In Ruskin's copy for revision, § 22 down to this point is marked at the side; the following sentence, "the impetus . . . leap below," is omitted; and the passages are connected, thus:—"with every yard that it runs; and the stream when it has gained an impetus," etc.]

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that the torrent-waves always break backwards, and sea-waves forwards.[1] Thus, then, in the water which has gained an impetus, we have the most exquisite arrangements of curved lines, perpetually changing from convex to concave, and *vice versâ*, following every swell and hollow of the bed with their modulating grace,[2] and all in unison of motion, presenting perhaps the most beautiful series of inorganic forms which nature can possibly produce; for the sea runs too much into similar and concave curves with sharp edges, but every motion of the torrent is united, and all its curves are modifications of beautiful line.[3]

§ 24. Its exquisite curved lines.

We see, therefore, why Turner seizes on these curved lines of the torrent, not only as being among the most beautiful forms[4] of nature, but because they are an instant expression of the utmost power and velocity, and tell us how the torrent has been flowing before we see it. For the leap and splash might be seen in the sudden freakishness of a quiet stream, or the fall of a rivulet over a mill-dam; but the undulating line is the

§ 25. Turner's careful choice of the historical truth.

[1] [The passage, "leopard; if it meet . . . sea-waves forwards," in eds. 1 and 2 runs thus:—

"leopard. The finest instance that I know, of this state of water, is the course of the Dranse near Martigny. That river has just descended a fall of six thousand feet in twenty miles, without, as far as I know, one break, stop, or resting-place in the whole distance; and its velocity and power are at last so tremendous that, if it meets a rock seven or eight feet above the level of its bed, it will neither part nor foam, nor express any concern about the matter, but clears it in a smooth dome of water, without apparent exertion, coming down again as smoothly on the other side, the whole surface of the surge being drawn into parallel lines by its extreme velocity, but quite foamless, except in places where the form of the bed opposes itself at some direct angle to such a line of fall, and causes a breaker; so that the whole river has the appearance of a deep and raging sea."]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 add, "little broken by foam."]

[3] [Eds. 1 and 2 read:—

"modifications of the line of beauty, quite unbroken by edges, except here and there where a rock rises too high to be cleared and causes a breaker."]

[4] [For "We see, therefore . . . most beautiful forms," eds. 1 and 2 read:—

"And now we can understand the peculiar excellence of Turner's torrent drawing. With his usual keen perception of all that is most essential in nature; of those qualities and truths which tell us most about the past as well as the present, he seizes on these curved lines of the torrent, not only as the most beautiful forms . . ."]

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attribute[1] of the mountain-torrent,* whose fall and fury have made the valleys echo for miles; and thus the moment we see one of its curves over a stone in the foreground, we know it has come far and fiercely. And in the drawing we have been speaking of, the Lower Fall of the Tees,[2] in the foreground of the Killiecrankie and Rhymer's Glen, and of the St. Maurice in Rogers's Italy, we shall find the most exquisite instances of the use of such lines; but the most perfect of all in the Llanthony Abbey,[3] which may be considered as the standard of torrent-drawing. The chief light of the picture here falls upon the surface of the stream, swelled by recent rain; and its mighty waves come rolling down close to the spectator, green and clear, but pale with anger, in broad, unbroken, oceanic curves, bending into each other without break, though jets of fiery spray are cast into the air along the rocky shore, and

§ 26. *His exquisite drawing of the continuous torrent in the Llanthony Abbey;*

* On a large scale it is exclusively so, but the same lines are to be seen, for the moment, whenever water becomes exceedingly rapid, and yet feels the bottom as it passes, being not thrown up or cast clear of it. In general, the drawing of water fails from being too interrupted, the forms flung hither and thither, and broken up and covered with bright touches, instead of being wrought out in their real unities of curvature. It is difficult enough to draw a curved surface, even when it is rough and has texture; but to indicate the varied and sweeping forms of a crystalline and polished substance, requires far more skill and patience than most artists possess. In some respects, it is impossible. I do not suppose any means of art are capable of rightly expressing the smooth multitudinous rippling of a rapid rivulet of shallow water, giving transparency, lustre, and fully developed form; and the greater number of the lines and actions of torrent-waves are equally inimitable. The effort should, nevertheless, always be made; and whatever is sacrificed in colour, freedom, or brightness, the real contours ought always in some measure to be drawn, as a careful draughtsman secures those of flesh, or any other finely modelled surface. It is better, in many respects, the drawing should miss of being *like* water, than that it should miss in this one respect the grandeur of water. Many tricks of scratching and dashing will bring out a deceptive resemblance; the determined and laborious rendering of contour alone secures sublimity.[4]

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[1] [For "attribute," eds. 1–4 read, "*exclusive* attribute."]

[2] [Above, § 21. "Killiecrankie" and "Rhymer's Glen" are in the *Prose Works* of Scott (vols. xxv. xxi.). "St. Maurice" is at p. 9 of the *Italy* (drawing, N.G. 205).]

[3] [See above, p. 402.]

[4] [Note first added in ed. 3. Eds. 3 and 4 omit the word "exclusively" in the first line of it.]

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rise in the sunshine in dusty vapour.[1] The whole surface is one united race of mad motion; all the waves dragged, as I have described, into lines and furrows by their swiftness; and every one of those fine forms is drawn with the most studied chiaroscuro of delicate colour, greys and greens, as silvery and pure as the finest passages of Paul Veronese, and with a refinement of execution which the eye strains itself in looking into. The rapidity and gigantic force of this torrent, the exquisite refinement of its colour, and the vividness of foam which is obtained through a general middle tint, render it about the most perfect piece of painting of running water in existence.

§ 27. And of the interrupted torrent in the Mercury and Argus.

Now this picture is, as was noticed in our former reference to it, full of expression of every kind of motion: the clouds are in wild haste; the sun is gleaming fast and fitfully through the leaves; the rain drifting away along the hill-side; and the torrent, the principal object, to complete the impression, is made the wildest thing of all; and not only wild before us, and with us, but bearing with it in its every motion, from its long course, the record of its rage. Observe how differently Turner uses his torrent when the spirit of the picture is repose. In the Mercury and Argus,[2] we have also a stream in the foreground; but, in coming down to us, we see it stopping twice in two quiet and glassy pools, upon which the drinking cattle cast an unstirred image. From the nearest of these, the water leaps in three cascades into another basin close to us; it trickles in silver threads through the leaves at its edge, and falls tinkling and splashing (though in considerable body) into the pool, stirring its quiet surface, at which a bird is stooping to drink, with concentric and curdling ripples, which divide round the stone at its farthest border, and descend in sparkling foam over the lip of the basin.[3] Thus we find, in every case,

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add a footnote: "Compare note, sec. iii. chap. iv. § 13."]
[2] [For list of other references to this picture see p. 264 *n.*]
[3] [Eds. 1 and 2 add:—
"presenting us, in the rest of their progress, with that most difficult of all appearances for a painter to render,—a torrent descending steeply as it retires from us."]

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the system of Turner's truth entirely unbroken, each phase and phenomenon of nature being recorded exactly[1] where it is most valuable and impressive.

§ 28. *Various cases.*

We have not, however, space to follow out the variety of his torrent-drawing. The above two examples are characteristic of the two great divisions or classes of torrents, that whose motion is continuous, and that whose motion is interrupted; all drawing of running water will resolve itself into the representation of one or other of these. The descent of the distant stream in the vignette to the Boy of Egremont is slight, but very striking; and the Junction of the Greta and Tees, a singular instance of the bold drawing of the complicated forms of a shallow stream among multitudinous rocks.[2] A still finer example[3] occurs in a recent drawing of Dazio Grande on the St. Gothard,[4] the waves of the Toccia, clear and blue, fretting among the granite débris which were brought down by the storm that destroyed the whole road. In the Ivy Bridge the subject is the rest of the torrent in a pool among fallen rocks, the forms of the stones are seen through the clear brown water, and their reflections mingle with those of the foliage.

§ 29. *Sea-painting. Impossibility of truly representing foam.*

More determined efforts have at all periods been made in sea-painting than in torrent-painting, yet less successful. As above stated, it is easy to obtain a resemblance of broken running water by tricks and dexterities, but the sea *must* be legitimately drawn; it cannot be given as utterly disorganised and confused, its weight and mass must be expressed, and the efforts at expression of it end in failure with all but the most powerful

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read, "recorded, each recorded with unequalled fidelity, and each recorded exactly . . ."]

[2] ["The Boy of Egremont" is at p. 186 of Rogers' *Poems* (drawing, N.G. 236). "The Junction of the Greta and Tees" drawing was given by Ruskin to his Drawing School at Oxford (see *Catalogue of the Standard Series*, No. 2); it was engraved in vol. ix. of Scott's *Poetical Works*.]

[3] [From here to the end of § 30 (p. 562) is not contained in eds. 1 and 2, which read, "But it is time for us to pass to the contemplation of Turner's drawing of the sea," and then continue as shown on p. 562 *n*.]

[4] [The "Dazio Grande" was in Ruskin's collection, No. 58 in his *Notes*; see also *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. Epilogue, § 3. For the "Ivy Bridge," see above, p. 244.]

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men; even with these few a partial success must be considered worthy of the highest praise.

As the right rendering of the Alps depends on power of drawing snow, so the right painting of the sea must depend, at least in all coast scenery, in no small measure on the power of drawing foam. Yet there are two conditions of foam of invariable occurrence on breaking waves, of which I have never seen the slightest record attempted; first, the thick, creamy, curdling, overlapping, massy foam, which remains for a moment only after the fall of the wave, and is seen in perfection in its running up the beach; and, secondly, the thin white coating into which this subsides, which opens into oval gaps and clefts, marbling the waves over their whole surface, and connecting the breakers on a flat shore by long dragging streams of white.[1]

It is evident that the difficulty of expressing either of these two conditions must be immense. The lapping and curdling foam is difficult enough to catch, even when the lines of its undulation alone are considered; but the lips, so to speak, which lie along these lines, are full, projecting, and marked by beautiful light and shade; each has its high light, a gradation into shadow of indescribable delicacy, a bright reflected light, and a dark cast shadow: to draw all this requires labour and care, and firmness of work, which, as I imagine, must always, however skilfully bestowed, destroy all impressions of wildness, accidentalism, and evanescence, and so kill the sea. Again, the openings in the thin subsided foam, in their irregular modifications of circular and oval shapes dragged hither and thither, would be hard enough to draw, even if they could be seen on a flat surface; instead of which, every one of the openings is seen in undulation on a tossing surface, broken up over small surges and ripples, and so thrown into perspectives of the most hopeless intricacy. Now it is not easy to express the fall of a pattern with oval openings on the folds of drapery. I do not know that any

[1] [On the failure, even of Turner, in the painting of foam, see *Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House*, 1856, *s.* Nos. 476 and 530.]

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one under the mark of Veronese or Titian could even do this as it ought to be done, yet in drapery much stiffness and error may be overlooked: not so in sea; the slightest inaccuracy, the slightest want of flow and freedom in the line, is attached by the eye, in a moment, of high treason, and I believe success to be impossible.

Yet there is not a wave, nor any violently agitated sea, on which both these forms do not appear; the latter especially, after some time of storm, extends over their whole surfaces: the reader sees, therefore, why I said that sea could only be painted by means of more or less dexterous conventionalism, since two of its most enduring phenomena cannot be represented at all.

§ 30. Character of shore-breakers also inexpressible.

Again, as respects the form of breakers on an even shore, there is difficulty of no less formidable kind. There is in them an irreconcilable mixture of fury and formalism. Their hollow surface is marked by parallel lines, like those of a smooth mill-weir, and graduated by reflected and transmitted lights of the most wonderful intricacy, its curve being at the same time necessarily of mathematical purity and precision; yet at the top of this curve, when it nods over, there is a sudden laxity and giving way, the water swings and jumps along the ridge like a shaken chain, and the motion runs from part to part as it does through a serpent's body. Then the wind is at work on the extreme edge, and instead of letting it fling itself off naturally, it supports it, and drives it back, or scrapes it off, and carries it bodily away; so that the spray at the top is in a continual transition between forms projected by their own weight, and forms blown and carried off with their weight overcome. Then at last, when it has come down, who shall say what shape that may be called, which "shape has none,"[1] of the great crash where it touches the beach?

I think it is that last crash which is the great taskmaster. Nobody can do anything with it. I have seen Copley

[1] [*Paradise Lost*, ii. 666.]

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Fielding come very close to the jerk and nod of the lifted threatening edge, curl it very successfully, and without any look of its having been in papers, down nearly to the beach, but the final fall has no thunder in it. Turner has tried hard for it once or twice, but it will not do. The moment is given in the Sidon of the Bible Illustrations, and more elaborately in a painting of Bamborough:[1] in both these cases there is little foam at the bottom, and the fallen breaker looks like a wall; yet grand always, and in the latter picture very beautifully assisted in expression by the tossing of a piece of cable, which some figures are dragging ashore, and which the breaker flings into the air as it rises. Perhaps the most successful rendering of the forms was in the Hero and Leander,[2] but there the drawing was rendered easier by the powerful effect of light which disguised the foam.

§ 31. Their effect, how injured when seen from the shore.

It is not, however, from the shore that Turner usually studies his sea.[3] Seen from the land, the curl of the breakers, even in nature, is somewhat uniform and monotonous; the size of the waves out at sea is uncomprehended; and those nearer the eye

[1] [The painting of Bamborough was sold from the Gillett collection in 1872 for £3309. It is now in the collection of Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt.]

[2] [See above, p. 242.]

[3] [In eds. 1 and 2 this section reads as follows:—

§ 29. His drawing of the sea. The essential ideas characteristic of the ocean.

"The idea of the sea which an unobservant landsman obtains by standing on the beach is a peculiarly limited and imperfect one. The curl of the breakers under ordinary circumstances is uniform and monotonous, both in its own form, and in its periodical repetition. The size of the waves out at sea is neither seen nor comprehended; and the image carried away is little more than that of an extensive field of large waves, all much resembling each other, moving gradually to the beach, and breaking in the same lines and forms.

"But such is not the real nor essential character of the sea. Afloat . . . all the rest—and the breakers, whose curl, seen from the land, had something of smallness and meanness in its contours, present . . . velocity and power. If, in such a position, whether in a boat, or on some isolated rock (the best by far the best) on a rocky coast, we abandon ourselves for hours to the passive reception of the great and essential impressions of that which is around us, the only way of arriving at a true feeling of its spirit, the three great ideas which we shall carry away with us will be those of recklessness, power, and breadth;—recklessness manifested in the . . . falling. When we see the waves successively . . . ."]

§ 30. Are recklessness, power, and breadth.

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seem to succeed and resemble each other, to move slowly to the beach, and to break in the same lines and forms.

Afloat even twenty yards from the shore, we receive a totally different impression. Every wave around us appears vast, every one different from all the rest; and the breakers present, now that we see them with their backs towards us, the grand, extended, and varied lines of long curvature which are peculiarly expressive both of velocity and power. Recklessness, before unfelt, is manifested in the mad, perpetual, changeful, undirected motion, not of wave after wave, as it appears from the shore, but of the very same water rising and falling. Of waves that successively approach and break, each appears to the mind a separate individual, whose part being performed, it perishes, and is succeeded by another; and there is nothing in this to impress us with the idea of restlessness, any more than in any successive and continuous functions of life and death. But it is when we perceive that it is no succession of wave, but the same water, constantly rising, and crashing, and recoiling, and rolling in again in new forms and with fresh fury, that we perceive the perturbed spirit, and feel the intensity of its unwearied rage. The sensation of power is also trebled; for not only is the vastness of apparent size much increased, but the whole action is different; it is not a passive wave, rolling sleepily forward until it tumbles heavily, prostrated upon the beach; but a sweeping exertion of tremendous and living strength, which does not now appear to *fall*, but to *burst* upon the shore; which never perishes but recoils and recovers.[1]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 read :—

"recoils and recovers. Finally, the sensation of *breadth* is peculiarly impressed, not by the extent of sea itself, but by the enormous sweep and hollow of every wave, of which no idea whatever can be formed from the beach, and by the grand unity of the curves of the breakers, which now appear to fall, not in curls, but in precipices.

"Now they are these grand characters of the sea which Turner invariably aims at, and never rests satisfied unless he has given; and, in consequence, even in his coast seas, he almost always . . . as in the 'Langharne,' 'Land's End,' 'Fowey,' and 'Dunbar.' But never failing to give at least one example of every truth, he has presented us with one most studied representation of a rolling sea, as seen from the shore, in the 'Hero

§ 31. *How Turner renders them in the "Hero and Leander."*

Aiming at these grand characters of the sea, Turner almost always places the spectator, not on the shore, but twenty or thirty yards from it, beyond the first range of the breakers, as in the Land's End, Fowey, Dunbar, and Laugharne.[1] The latter has been well engraved, and may be taken as a standard of the expression of fitfulness and power. The grand division of the whole space of the sea by a few dark continuous furrows of tremendous swell (the breaking of one of which alone has strewed the rocks in front with ruin) furnishes us with an estimate of space and strength, which at once reduces the men upon the shore to insects; and yet through this terrific simplicity there are indicated a fitfulness and fury in the tossing of the individual lines, which give to the whole sea a wild, unwearied, reckless incoherency, like that of an enraged multitude, whose masses act together in phrensy, while not one individual feels as another. Especial attention is to be directed to the flatness of all the lines, for the same principle holds in sea which we have seen in mountains. All the size and sublimity of nature are given, not by the height, but by the breadth, of her masses; and Turner, by following her in her sweeping lines, while he does not lose the elevation of its surges, adds in a tenfold degree to their power. Farther, observe the peculiar expression of *weight* which there is in Turner's waves, precisely of the same kind which we saw in his waterfall. We have not a cutting, springing, elastic line; no jumping or leaping in the waves: *that* is the characteristic of Chelsea Reach or Hampstead Ponds in a storm. But the surges roll

§ 32. *Turner's expression of heavy rolling sea,*

§ 33. *With peculiar expression of weight.*

and Leander.' The drawing of the approaching and falling breakers, under the moonlight, in this picture, must, I believe, remain, like the memory of some of the mighty scenes of nature herself, impressed for ever on the minds of all who have once seen it.

§ 32. *In the "Laugharne."* "But it is on such wild coast seas as those of the 'Land's End' and 'Laugharne' that Turner's power is chiefly concentrated. The latter . . ."]

[1] ["Fowey" in the *Southern Coast* (No. 10). "Land's End" (*i.e.*, "Longships Lighthouse, Land's End") in *England and Wales* (No. 20); see p. 404 *n.* "Laugharne Castle" (engraved by J. Horsburgh) in *England and Wales* (No. 16). "Dunbar" was engraved in *Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland, with descriptive illustrations by Sir Walter Scott* (1826).]

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and plunge with such prostration and hurling of their mass against the shore, that we feel the rocks are shaking under them. And, to add yet more to this impression, observe how little, comparatively, they are broken by the wind: above the floating wood, and along the shore, we have indication of a line of torn spray; but it is a mere fringe along the ridge of the surge, no interference with its gigantic body. The wind has no power over its tremendous unity of force and weight. Finally, observe how, on the rocks on the left, the violence and swiftness of the rising wave are indicated by precisely the same lines which we saw were indicative of fury in the torrent. The water on these rocks is the body of the wave which has just broken, rushing up over them; and in doing so, like the torrent, it does not break, nor foam, nor part upon the rock, but accommodates itself to every one of its swells and hollows with undulating lines, whose grace and variety might alone serve us for a day's study; and it is only where two streams of this rushing water meet in the hollow of the rock, that their force is shown by the vertical bound of the spray.

§ 34. *Peculiar action of recoiling waves;*

In the distance of this grand picture there are two waves which entirely depart from the principle observed by all the rest, and spring high into the air. They have a message for us which it is important that we should understand. Their leap is not a preparation for breaking, neither is it caused by their meeting with a rock. It is caused by their encounter with the recoil of the preceding wave. When a large surge, in the act of breaking, just as it curls over, is hurled against the face either of a wall or of a vertical rock, the sound of the blow is not a crash, nor a roar, it is a report as loud as, and in every respect similar to, that of a great gun, and the wave is dashed back from the rock with force scarcely diminished, but reversed in direction; it now recedes from the shore, and at the instant that it encounters the following breaker, the result is the vertical bound of both which is here rendered by Turner. Such a recoiling wave will proceed out to sea through ten or twelve ranges of following

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breakers, before it is overpowered. The effect of the encounter is more completely and palpably given in the Quillebœuf, in the Rivers of France.[1] It is peculiarly instructive here, as informing us of the nature of the coast, and the force of the waves, far more clearly than any spray about the rocks themselves could have done. But the effect of the blow at the shore itself is given in the Land's End, and Tantallon Castle.[2] Under favourable circumstances with an advancing tide under a heavy gale, where the breakers feel the shore underneath them a moment before they touch the rock, so as to nod over when they strike, the effect is nearly incredible except to an eye-witness. I have seen the whole body of the wave rise in one white vertical broad fountain, eighty feet above the sea, half of it beaten so fine as to be borne away by the wind, the rest turning in the air when exhausted, and falling back with a weight and crash like that of an enormous waterfall. This is given in the vignette to "Lycidas;"[3] and the blow of a less violent wave among broken rocks, not meeting it with an absolute wall, along the shore of the Land's End. This last picture is a study of sea whose whole organization has been broken up by constant recoils from a rocky coast. The Laugharne gives the surge and weight of the ocean in a gale, on a comparatively level shore; but the Land's End, the entire disorder of the surges when every one of them, divided and entangled among promontories as it rolls in, and beaten back part by part from walls of rock on this side and that side, recoils like the defeated division of a great army, throwing all behind it into disorder, breaking up the succeeding waves into vertical ridges, which in their turn, yet more totally shattered upon the shore, retire in more hopeless confusion; until the whole surface of the sea becomes one dizzy whirl of rushing, writhing, tortured, undirected rage,

§ 35. And of the stroke of a breaker on the shore.

§ 36. General character of sea on a rocky coast given by Turner in the Land's End.

[1] [Plate 19 in *The Seine and the Loire* (drawing, N.G. 127).]

[2] [The "Land's End" here described is the "Longships Lighthouse" (see plate opposite, and note on pp. 403–404). "Tantallon Castle" is in *Illustrations to the Poetical Works of Scott* (London, 1834).]

[3] [The "Shipwreck of Lycidas" is in the *Poetical Works of Milton* (1841).]

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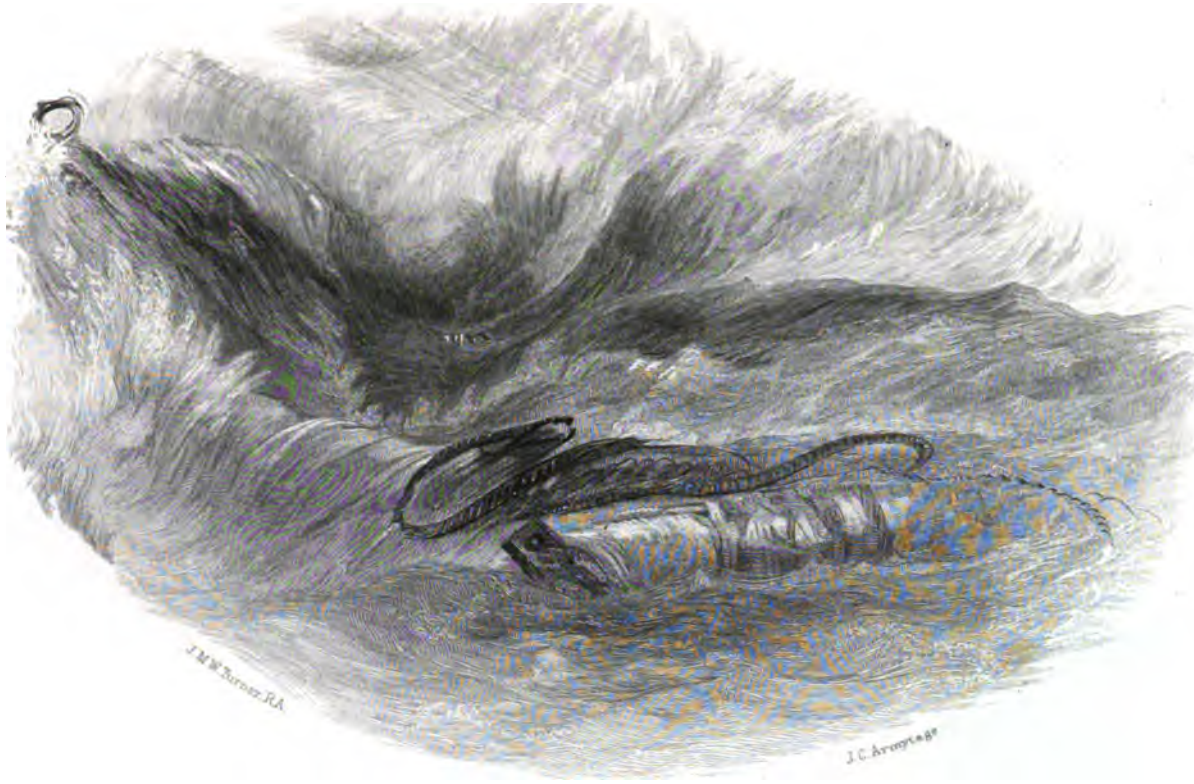

Study from "The Longships Lighthouse."

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bounding, and crashing, and coiling in an anarchy of enormous power; subdivided into myriads of waves, of which every one is not, be it remembered, a separate surge, but part and portion of a vast one, actuated by internal power, and giving in every direction the mighty undulation of impetuous line which glides over the rocks and writhes in the wind, overwhelming the one, and piercing the other with the form, fury, and swiftness of a sheet of lambent fire. And throughout the rendering of all this there is not one false curve given, not one which is not the perfect expression of visible motion; and the forms of the infinite sea are drawn throughout with that utmost mastery of art which, through the deepest study of every line, makes every line appear the wildest child of chance, while yet each is in itself a subject and a picture different from all else around. Of the colour of this magnificent sea I have before spoken; it is a solemn green grey (with its foam seen dimly through the darkness of twilight), modulated with the fulness, changefulness, and sadness of a deep wild melody.

§ 37. Open seas of Turner's earlier time.

The greater number of Turner's paintings[1] of open sea belong to a somewhat earlier period than these drawings; nor, generally speaking, are they of equal value. It appears to me that the artist had at that time either less knowledge of, or less delight in, the characteristics of deep water than of coast sea; and that, in consequence, he suffered himself to be influenced by some of the qualities of the Dutch sea-painters. In particular, he borrowed from them the habit of casting a dark shadow on the near waves, so as to bring out a stream of light behind; and though he did this in a more legitimate way than they, that is to say, expressing the light by touches on the foam, and indicating the shadow as cast on foamy surface, still the habit has induced much feebleness and conventionality in the pictures of the period. His drawing of the waves was also somewhat petty and divided, small forms covered with white flat spray, a condition which I doubt not the artist has seen on some of the shallow Dutch seas, but which I have never met

[1] [This section (§ 37) was not contained in eds. 1 and 2.]

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with myself, and of the rendering of which therefore I cannot speak. Yet even in these, which I think among the poorest works of the painter, the expressions of breeze, motion, and light, are very marvellous; and it is instructive to compare them either with the lifeless works of the Dutch themselves, or with any modern imitations of them; as for instance with the seas of Callcott, where all the light is white, and all the shadows grey, where no distinction is made between water and foam, or between real and reflective shadow, and which are generally without evidence of the artist's having ever seen the sea.

Some pictures, however, belonging to this period of Turner, are free from the Dutch infection, and show the real power of the artist. A very important one is in the possession of the Earl of Ellesmere, somewhat heavy in its forms, but remarkable for the grandeur of distance obtained at the horizon; a much smaller, but more powerful example is the Port Ruysdael in the possession of E. Bicknell, Esq.,[1] with which I know of no work at all comparable for the expression of the white, wild, cold, comfortless waves of northern sea, even though the sea is almost subordinate to the awful rolling clouds. Both these pictures are very grey. The Pas de Calais[2] has more colour, and shows more art than either, yet is less impressive. Recently (1843), two marine subjects of the same subdued colour have appeared in the midst of more radiant works.[3] One, Ostend, somewhat forced and affected, but the other, also called Port Ruysdael, is among the most perfect sea pictures he has produced, and especially remarkable as being painted without one marked opposition either of colour or of shade, all quiet and simple even to an extreme, so that

[1] [The sea-piece in the Ellesmere Gallery (Bridgewater House)—"Dutch Boats in a Gale: Fishermen endeavouring to put their Fish on Board"—was exhibited at the Academy in 1801. It was painted as a rival to a Vandevelde (see Thornbury, p. 325). The "Port Ruysdael," formerly in the Bicknell collection (for which see above, p. 244 n.), was exhibited at the Academy in 1827; it is now in that of Mr. Drummond of Montreal; it is engraved in *Turner and Ruskin*.]

[2] [See above, p. 510.]

[3] ["Ostend" (R.A. 1844) was formerly in the Munro (of Novar) collection; now in that of Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt. The "Port Ruysdael" (R.A. 1844) is No. 536 in the National Gallery.]

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J. M. W. Turner, R.A.

Allen & Co. Sc.

Port Ruysdael.

From the Picture in possession of the Honble. J. A. Drummond

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the picture was exceedingly unattractive at first sight. The shadow of the pier-head on the near waves is marked solely by touches indicative of reflected light, and so mysteriously that when the picture is seen near, it is quite untraceable, and comes into existence as the spectator retires. It is instructive as a contrast to the dark shadows of his earlier time.[1]

§ 38. *Effect of sea after prolonged storm.*

Few people, comparatively, have ever seen the effect on the sea of a powerful gale continued without intermission for three or four days and nights; and to those who have not, I believe it must be unimaginable, not from the mere force or size of surge, but from the complete annihilation of the limit between sea and air. The water from its prolonged agitation is beaten, not into mere creaming foam, but into masses of accumulated yeast,* which

* The "yesty waves" of Shakspeare have made the likeness familiar, and probably most readers take the expression as merely equivalent to "foamy;" but Shakspeare knew better. Sea-foam does not, under ordinary circumstances, last a moment after it is formed, but disappears, as above described, in a mere white film. But the foam of a prolonged tempest is altogether different; it is "whipped" foam, thick, permanent, and, in a foul or discoloured sea, very ugly, especially in the way it hangs about the tops of the waves, and gathers into clotted concretions before the driving wind. The sea looks truly working or fermenting. The following passage from Fenimore Cooper is an interesting confirmation of the rest of the above description, which may be depended upon as entirely free from exaggeration:—"For the first time I now witnessed a tempest at sea. Gales, and pretty hard ones, I had often seen, but the force of the wind on this occasion, as much exceeded that in ordinary gales of wind, as the force of these had exceeded that of a wholesail breeze. The seas seemed crushed; the pressure of the swooping atmosphere, as the currents of the air went howling over the surface of the ocean, fairly preventing them from rising; or where a mound of water did appear, it was scooped up and borne off in spray, as the axe dubs inequalities from the log. When the day returned, a species of lurid sombre light was diffused over the watery waste, though nothing was visible but the ocean and the ship. Even the sea-birds seemed to have taken refuge in the caverns of the adjacent coast, none reappearing with the dawn. The air was full of spray, and it was with difficulty that the eye could penetrate as far into the humid atmosphere as half a mile."—*Miles Wallingford.* Half a mile is an over-estimate on coast sea.[2]

[1] [Eds. 3 and 4 read: "It is thus of peculiar truth and value; and is instructive," etc.]

[2] [Note first added in ed. 3. Eds. 1 and 2 had this one:—

"'The yesty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up.'—*Macbeth,* Act iv. Sc. 1."

For Ruskin's reading of Fenimore Cooper, see *Præterita,* i. ch. v. § 118.]

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hang in ropes and wreaths from wave to wave, and, where one curls over to break, form a festoon like a drapery from its edge; these are taken up by the wind, not in dissipating dust, but bodily, in writhing, hanging, coiling masses, which make the air white and thick as with snow, only the flakes are a foot or two long each: the surges themselves are full of foam in their very bodies, underneath, making them white all through, as the water is under a great cataract; and their masses, being thus half water and half air, are torn to pieces by the wind whenever they rise, and carried away in roaring smoke, which chokes and strangles like actual water. Add to this, that when the air has been exhausted of its moisture by long rain, the spray of the sea is caught by it as described above (Section III. Chapter IV. § 18), and covers its surface not merely with the smoke of finely divided water, but with boiling mist; imagine also the low rain-clouds brought down to the very level of the sea, as I have often seen them, whirling and flying in rags and fragments from wave to wave; and finally, conceive the surges themselves in their utmost pitch of power, velocity, vastness, and madness, lifting themselves in precipices and peaks, furrowed with their whirl of ascent, through all this chaos; and you will understand that there is indeed no distinction left between the sea and air; that no object, nor horizon, nor any land-mark or natural evidence of position is left; that the heaven is all spray, and the ocean all cloud, and that you can see no farther in any direction than you could see through a cataract.[1] ⌈ Suppose the effect of the first sunbeam

[1] [§ 33, from the beginning down to "cataract," is § 31 of *Frondes Agrestes*. Ruskin there added the following note:—

"The whole of this was written merely to show the meaning of Turner's picture of the steamer in distress, throwing up signals. It is a good study of wild weather; but, separate from its aim, utterly feeble in comparison to the few words by which any of the great poets will describe sea, when they have got to do it. I am rather proud of the short sentence in the *Harbours of England*, describing a great breaker against rock,—'One moment, a flint cave,—the next, a marble pillar,—the next, a fading cloud.' But there is nothing in sea-description, detailed, like Dickens's storm at the death of Ham, in *David Copperfield*" [ch. lv.].

The actual passage in the *Harbours* is:—"One moment, a flint cave; the next, a marble pillar; the next, a mere white fleece thickening the thundery rain." Ruskin elsewhere refers his readers to Dickens for the best description of a thunder-shower.

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sent from above to show this annihilation to itself, and you have the sea picture of the Academy, 1842, the Snowstorm, one of the very grandest statements of sea-motion, mist, and light, that has ever been put on canvas, even by Turner. Of course it was not understood; his finest works never are: but there was some apology for the public's not comprehending this, for few people have had the opportunity of seeing the sea at such a time, and when they have, cannot face it. To hold by a mast or a rock, and watch it, is a prolonged endurance of drowning which few people have courage to go through. To those who have, it is one of the noblest lessons of nature.[1]

§ 39. Turner's noblest work, the painting of the deep open sea in the Slave Ship.

But, I think,[2] the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of the Slave Ship, the chief Academy picture of the Exhibition of 1840.[3] It is a sunset on the Atlantic, after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an

"If you look at Charles Dickens's letter about the rain in Glencoe, in Mr. Forster's Life of him, it will give you a better idea of the kind of thing than I can, for my forte is really not description, but political economy" (*Fors Clavigera*, Letter xix.). For another reference to Dickens's close observation of natural phenomena, see above, p. 347, and for Ruskin's early reading of him, Vol. I. p. xlix. The picture of "the steamer," etc., is the "Snowstorm," referred to below.]

[1] ["Snowstorm: Steamboat off a harbour's mouth making signals, in shallow water, and going by the lead," No. 530 in the National Gallery. See *Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House*, for another description of the picture and for some anecdotes with regard to it. See also above, pp. 297, 534, and *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xii. § 4 *n.*]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 read "beyond dispute" for "I think."]

[3] ["Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying—Typhon coming on." For other references to the picture, see above, pp. 247, 249, 273, 297, 414, 422, and *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. iv. § 20; vol. iv. ch. xviii. § 24; vol. v. pt. vii. ch. iv. § 15, pt. ix. ch. xi. § 31 *n.* See also above, Introduction, p. lv. The following note in Ruskin's diary refers to the present passage:—

> *Nov.* 24, 1843. Griffith [the picture-dealer] told me Prout had been to look at the "Slaver," and after standing some time before it, exclaimed that "by heaven all that Mr. R. said of it is true!"]

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awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendour which burns like gold, and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamp-like fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the undistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty * ship as it labours amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.[1]

§ 40. *Its united excellences and perfection as a whole.*

I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this. Its daring conception, ideal in the highest sense of the word, is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life; its colour is absolutely perfect, not one false or morbid hue in any part or line, and so modulated that every square inch of canvas is a perfect composition; its drawing as accurate as fearless; the ship buoyant, bending, and full

* She is a slaver, throwing her slaves overboard. The near sea is encumbered with corpses.

[1] [This my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine
Making the green, one red.—*Macbeth*, ii. 2, 62.]

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J M W Turner R.A. Allen & Co Sc

The Slave Ship.

From the Picture in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, U.S.A.

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of motion; its tones as true as they are wonderful;* and the whole picture dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions (completing thus the perfect system of all truth, which we have shown to be formed by Turner's works)—the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable sea.

* There is a piece of tone of the same kind, equal in one part, but not so united with the rest of the picture, in the storm scene illustrative of the Antiquary,[1]—a sunset light on polished sea. I ought to have particularly mentioned the sea in the Lowestoft, as a piece of the cutting motion of shallow water under storm, altogether in grey, which should be especially contrasted, as a piece of colour, with the greys of Vandevelde. And the sea in the Great Yarmouth should have been noticed for its expression of water under a fresh gale, seen in enormous extent from a great elevation. There is almost every form of sea in it: rolling waves dashing on the pier; successive breakers rolling to the shore; a vast horizon of multitudinous waves;[2] and winding canals of calm water along the sands, bringing fragments of bright sky down into their yellow waste. There is hardly one of the views of the Southern Coast which does not give some new condition or circumstance of sea.

[1] [The illustration to the *Antiquary* is of Ballyburgh Ness, and was engraved by E. Finden in Scott's *Novels* (1836); for another reference, see above, p. 417. For the "Lowestoft," see preceding chapter, § 9, p. 534. The "Great Yarmouth" is in *England and Wales*, No. 7.]

[2] [Eds. 1 and 2 add, "the ποντίων κυμάτων ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα," and for the last sentence of the note, "There is hardly . . . of sea," read, "You may tire yourself by walking over the extent of that shore." For the quotation from Æschylus, see Vol. II. p. 36.]

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SECTION VI

OF TRUTH OF VEGETATION.—CONCLUSION

CHAPTER I

OF TRUTH OF VEGETATION

§ 1. Frequent occurrence of foliage in the works of the old masters.[1]

We have now arrived at the consideration of what was, with the old masters, the subject of most serious and perpetual study. If they do not give us truth here, they cannot have the faculty of truth in them: for foliage is the chief component part of all their pictures, and is finished by them with a care and labour which, if bestowed without attaining truth, must prove either their total bluntness of perception, or total powerlessness of hand. With the Italian school, I can scarcely recollect a single instance in which foliage does not form the greater part of the picture; in fact, they are rather painters of tree-portrait than landscape painters; for rocks, and sky, and architecture are usually mere accessaries and backgrounds to the dark masses of laborious foliage, of which the composition principally consists.[2] Yet we shall be less detained by the examination of foliage than by our former subjects; since

[1] [In eds. 1 and 2 this section is entitled, "Extreme difficulty of representing foliage, and ease with which the truth of its representation may be determined."]

[2] [Here eds. 1 and 2 read thus:—

"principally consists. And it is a daring choice; for of all objects that defeat and defy the utmost efforts of the painter to approach their beauty, a noble tree is the most inimitable; and I scarcely know a more hopeless state of discouragement—a more freezing and fettering sensation of absolute impotence, than that which comes over the artist in his forest walks, as he sees the floor, and the pillars, and the roof of the great temple, one labyrinth of loveliness, one wilderness of perfection, with the chequering sunbeams dancing before him like mocking spirits; and the merry leaves laughing and

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where specific form is organized and complete, and the occurrence of the object universal, it is easy, without requiring any laborious attention in the reader, to demonstrate to him quite as much of the truth or falsehood of various representations of it, as may serve to determine the character and rank of the painter.

It will be best to begin as nature does, with the stems and branches, and then to put the leaves on. And in speaking of trees generally, be it observed, when I say *all* trees, I mean only those ordinary forest or copse trees of Europe, which are the chief subjects of the landscape painter. I do not mean to include every kind of foliage which by any accident can find its way into a picture, but the ordinary trees of Europe: oak, elm, ash, hazel, willow, birch, beech, poplar, chestnut, pine, mulberry, olive, ilex, carob, and such others. I do not purpose to examine the characteristics of each tree; it will be enough to observe the laws common to all. First, then, neither the stems nor the boughs of any of the above trees *taper*, except where they fork. Wherever a stem sends off a branch, or a branch a lesser bough, or a lesser bough a bud, the stem of the branch is, on the instant, less in diameter by the exact quantity of the branch or the bough they have sent off, and they remain of the same diameter; or if there be any change, rather increase than diminish until they send off another branch or bough. This law is imperative and without exception; no bough, nor stem, nor twig, ever tapering or becoming narrower towards its extremity by a hair's-breadth, save where it parts with some portion of its substance at a fork or bud, so that if all the twigs and sprays at the top and sides of the tree, which are, and *have been*, could be united without loss of space, they

§ 2. *Laws common to all forest trees. Their branches do not taper, but only divide.*

whispering about him in the pride of their beauty, as knowing that he cannot catch nor imitate one ray, nor one form of their hues and their multitude.

"Although, however, there is insuperable difficulty in the painting of foliage, there is, fortunately, little difficulty in ascertaining the comparative truth of the representation; for whenever specific form and character is organized and complete, it is easy, without requiring any laborious attention or extraordinary knowledge in the reader, to demonstrate," etc.]

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would form a round log of at least the diameter of the trunk from which they spring.

§ 3. *Appearance of tapering caused by frequent buds.*

But as the trunks of most trees send off twigs and sprays of light under-foliage, of which every individual fibre takes precisely its own thickness of wood from the parent stem, and as many of these drop off, leaving nothing but a small excrescence to record their existence, there is frequently a slight and delicate appearance of tapering caused in the trunk itself; while the same operation takes place much more extensively in the branches; it being natural to almost all trees to send out from their young limbs more wood than they can support; which, as the stem increases, gets contracted at the point of insertion, so as to check the flow of the sap, and then dies and drops off, leaving all along the bough, first on one side, then on another, a series of small excrescences sufficient to account for a degree of tapering, which is yet so very slight that if we select a portion of a branch with no real fork or living bough to divide it or diminish it, the tapering is scarcely to be detected by the eye; and if we select a portion without such evidences of past ramification, there will be found none whatsoever.

§ 4. *And care of nature to conceal the parallelism.*

But nature takes great care and pains to conceal this uniformity in her boughs. They are perpetually parting with little sprays here and there, which steal away their substance cautiously and where the eye does not perceive the theft, until, a little way above, it feels the loss; and in the upper parts of the tree, the ramifications take place so constantly and delicately, that the effect upon the eye is precisely the same as if the boughs actually tapered, except here and there, where some avaricious one, greedy of substance, runs on for two or three yards without parting with anything, and becomes ungraceful in so doing.

Hence we see that although boughs may and must be represented as actually tapering, they must only be so when they are sending off foliage and sprays, and when they are at

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such a distance that the particular forks and divisions cannot be evident to the eye; and farther, even in such circumstances, the tapering never can be sudden or rapid. No bough ever, with appearance of smooth tapering, loses more than one tenth of its diameter in a length of ten diameters. Any greater diminution than this must be accounted for by visible ramification, and must take place by steps, at each fork.

§ 5. The degree of tapering which may be represented as continuous.

And therefore we see at once that the stem of Gaspar Poussin's tall tree, on the right of the La Riccia, in the National Gallery,[1] is a painting of a carrot or a parsnip, not of the trunk of a tree. For, being so near that every individual leaf is visible, we should not have seen, in nature, one branch or stem actually tapering. We should have received an *impression* of graceful diminution; but we should have been able, on examination, to trace it joint by joint, fork by fork, into the thousand minor supports of the leaves. Gaspar Poussin's stem, on the contrary, only sends off four or five minor branches altogether, and both it and they taper violently, and without showing why or wherefore; without parting with a single twig, without showing one vestige of roughness or excrescence; and leaving, therefore, their unfortunate leaves to hold on as best they may. The latter, however, are clever leaves, and support themselves as swarming bees do, hanging on by each other.

§ 6. The trees of Gaspar Poussin,

But even this piece[2] of work is a jest to the perpetration of the bough at the left-hand upper corner of the picture opposite to it, the View near Albano.[3] This latter is a representation[4] of an ornamental group of elephants' tusks, with feathers tied to the ends of them. Not the wildest imagination could ever

§ 7. And of the Italian school generally, defy this law.

[1] [See above, pp. 277, 588 *n.*]

[2] [For "this piece," eds. 1 and 2 read, "this precious piece."]

[3] [No. 68 in the National Gallery; the scene depicted is the "Galleria di Sopra," which skirts the upper margin of the Lake of Albano. For further criticisms, see below, §§ 16–19.]

[4] [For "This latter is a representation," eds. 1 and 2 read, "This is a fine example of the general system of bough-drawing of the Italian school. It is a representation . . ."]

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conjure up in it the remotest resemblance to the bough of a tree. It might be the claws of a witch, the talons of an eagle, the horns of a fiend; but it is a full assemblage of every conceivable falsehood which can be told respecting foliage, a piece of work so barbarous in every way, that one glance at it ought to prove the complete charlatanism and trickery of the whole system of the old landscape painters. For I will depart for once from my usual plan, of abstaining from all assertion of a thing's being beautiful or otherwise; I will say here, at once, that such drawing as this is as ugly as it is childish, and as painful as it is false; and that the man who could tolerate, much more, who could deliberately set down such a thing on his canvas, had neither eye nor feeling for one single attribute or excellence of God's works. He might have drawn the other stem in excusable ignorance, or under some false impression of being able to improve upon nature; but *this* is conclusive and unpardonable. Again, take the stem of the chief tree in Claude's Narcissus.[1] It is a very faithful portrait of a large boa constrictor, with a handsome tail; the kind of trunk which young ladies at fashionable boarding-schools represent with nosegays at the top of them by way of forest scenery.

§ 8. *The truth, as it is given by J. D. Harding.*

Let us refresh ourselves for a moment, by looking at the truth. We need not go to Turner,[2] we will go to the man who next to him is unquestionably the greatest master of foliage in Europe, J. D. Harding.[3] Take the trunk of the largest stone-pine, plate 25 in "The Park and the Forest."[4] For the first nine or ten feet from the ground it does not lose one hair's-breadth of its diameter. But the shoot broken off just under the crossing

[1] [No. 19 in the National Gallery; see also below, § 9.]

[2] [At "Turner" eds. 1 and 2 add a note, "Compare § 12" (§ 13 in later eds.).]

[3] [With this passage should be read *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), §§ 128–15[illegible], where, though Ruskin reaffirms his praise of Harding's tree-drawing, he makes some qualifications. His "are the only works by a modern draughtsman which express in any wise the energy of trees, and the laws of growth;" but they fail because they "cannot rightly render any one individual detail or incident of foliage." See also below, § 29.]

[4] [*The Park and the Forest*, by J. D. Harding, 1841 (a volume of lithographic plates.)]

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part of the distant tree is followed by an instant diminution of the trunk, perfectly appreciable both by the eye and the compasses. Again, the stem maintains undiminished thickness up to the two shoots on the left, from the loss of which it suffers again perceptibly. On the right, immediately above, is the stump of a very large bough, whose loss reduces the trunk suddenly to about two thirds of what it was at the root. Diminished again, less considerably, by the minor branch close to this stump, it now retains its diameter up to the three branches broken off just under the head, where it once more loses in diameter; and finally branches into the multitude of head-boughs, of which not one will be found tapering in any part, but losing itself gradually by division among its off-shoots and spray. This is nature, and beauty too.

§ 9. *Boughs, in consequence of this law,* must *diminish where they divide. Those of the old masters often do not.*

But the old masters are not satisfied with drawing carrots for boughs. Nature can be violated in more ways than one, and the industry with which they seek out and adopt every conceivable mode of contradicting her is matter of no small interest. It is evident from what we have above stated of the structure of all trees, that as no boughs diminish where they do not fork, so they cannot fork without diminishing. It is impossible that the smallest shoot can be sent out of the bough without a diminution of the diameter above it; and wherever a branch goes off it must not only be less in diameter than the bough from which it springs, but the bough beyond the fork must be less by precisely the quantity of the branch it has sent off.* Now observe the

* It sometimes happens that a morbid direction of growth will cause an exception here and there to this rule, the bough swelling beyond its legitimate size: knots and excrescences, of course, sometimes interfere with the effect of diminution. I believe that in the laurel, when it grows large and old, singular instances may be found of thick upper boughs and over-quantity of wood at the extremities. All these accidents or exceptions are felt as such by the eye. They may occasionally be used by the painter in savage or grotesque scenery, or as points of contrast, but are no excuse for his ever losing sight of the general law.[1]

[1] [Note first added in ed. 3.]

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bough underneath the first bend of the great stem in Claude's Narcissus;[1] it sends off four branches like the ribs of a leaf. The two lowest of these are both quite as thick as the parent stem, and the stem itself is much thicker after it has sent off the first one than it was before. The top boughs of the central tree, in the Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca,[2] ramify in the same scientific way.

§ 10. Boughs must multiply as they diminish. Those of the old masters do not.

But there are farther conclusions to be drawn from this great principle in trees. As they only diminish where they divide, their increase of number is in precise proportion to their diminution of size; so that whenever we come to the extremities of boughs, we must have a multitude of sprays sufficient to make up, if they were united, the bulk of that from which they spring.[3] Precision in representing this is neither desirable nor possible. All that is required is just so much observance of the general principle as may make the eye feel satisfied that there is something like the same quantity of wood in the sprays which there is in the stem. But to do this there must be, what there always is in nature, an exceeding complexity of the outer sprays. This complexity gradually increases towards their extremities, of course exactly in proportion to the slenderness of the twigs. The slenderer they become, the more there are of them, until at last, at the extremities of the tree, they form a mass of intricacy, which in winter, when it can be seen, is scarcely distinguishable from fine herbage, and is beyond all power of definite representation; it can only be expressed by a mass of involved strokes. Also,

[1] [See above, § 7.]
[2] [See above, p. 41 *n.*]
[3] [Eds. 1–4 here read thus :—
"from which they spring. Where a bough divides into two equal ramifications, the diameter of each of the two is about two-thirds that of the single one, and the sum of these diameters, therefore, one-fourth greater than the diameter of the single one. Hence, if no boughs died or were lost, the quantity of wood in the sprays would appear one-fourth greater than would be necessary to make up the thickness of the trunk. But the lost boughs remove the excess, and therefore, speaking broadly, the diameters of the outer boughs put together would generally just make up the diameter of the trunk. Now mathematical precision . . ."]

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as they shoot out in every direction, some are nearer, some more distant; some distinct, some faint; and their intersections and relations of distance are marked with the most exquisite gradations of aërial perspective. Now it will be found universally,[1] in the works of Claude, Gaspar, and Salvator, that the boughs do *not* get in the least complex or multiplied towards the extremities; that each large limb forks only into two or three smaller ones, each of which vanishes into the air without any cause or reason for such unaccountable conduct, unless that the mass of leaves transfixed upon it or tied to it, entirely dependent on its single strength, have been too much, as well they may be, for its powers of solitary endurance. This total ignorance of tree-structure is shown throughout their works. The Sinon before Priam[2] is an instance of it in a really fine work of Claude's, but the most gross examples are in the works of Salvator.[3] It appears that this latter artist was hardly in the habit of studying from nature at all, after his boyish ramble among the Calabrian hills; and I do not recollect any instance of a piece of his bough-drawing which is not palpably and demonstrably a made up phantasm of the studio, the proof derivable from this illegitimate tapering being one of the most convincing. The painter is always visibly embarrassed to reduce the thick boughs to spray, and *feeling* (for Salvator naturally had acute feeling for truth) that the bough was wrong when it tapered suddenly, he accomplishes its diminution by an impossible protraction; throwing out shoot after shoot until his branches straggle all across the picture, and at last disappear unwillingly where there is no room for them to stretch any farther. The consequence is, that whatever leaves are put upon such boughs have evidently no adequate support, their power of leverage is enough to uproot the tree; or, if the boughs are left bare,

§ 11. *Bough-drawing of Salvator.*

[1] [This passage, down to "wings of a pterodactyle" in § 11, is marked in Ruskin's copy.]

[2] [Otherwise called "David at the Cave of Adullam"; see above, pp. 295, 437.]

[3] [The passage, from "but the most gross examples. . . . Not so with Claude" (inclusive), is not contained in eds. 1 and 2, in which § 12 appears as § 11: "But it is only by looking over the sketches of Claude . . ."]

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they have the look of the long tentacula of some complicated marine monster, or of the waving endless threads of bunchy sea-weed, instead of the firm, upholding, braced, and bending grace of natural boughs. I grant that this is in a measure done by Salvator from a love of ghastliness, and that in certain scenes it is in a sort allowable: but it is in a far greater degree done from pure ignorance of tree-structure, as is sufficiently proved by the landscape of the Pitti Palace, Peace burning the arms of War;[1] where the spirit of the scene is intended to be quite other than ghastly, and yet the tree branches show the usual errors in an extraordinary degree; every one of their arrangements is impossible, and the trunk of the tree could not for a moment support the foliage it is loaded with. So also in the pictures of the Guadagni Palace.[2] And even where the skeleton look of branches is justifiable or desirable, there is no occasion for any violation of natural laws. I have seen more spectral character in the real limbs of a blasted oak, than ever in Salvator's best monstrosities; more horror is to be obtained by right combination of inventive line, than by drawing tree branches as if they were wing-bones of a pterodactyle. All departure from natural forms to give fearfulness is mere Germanism; it is the work of fancy, not of imagination,* and instantly degrades whatever it affects to a third-rate level. There is nothing more marked in truly great

* Compare Part III. sec. ii. chap. iv. §§ 6, 7.

[1] [No. 453, painted for Cardinal Carlo de' Medici. This passage was added in the 1846 ed.; in his Florentine diary of 1845 Ruskin made the following note on the picture:—

"It struck me at first as fine from its simple treatment—a single dark tree against afternoon sun, which melts the distance down into light. This light is well painted, transparent, and softly blended, Cuyp-like, but the treatment is exactly the opposite of Rubens' and Turner's. The details of the foreground are here carefully painted, while the distance is all slurred into nothing, so that the picture has no attractiveness on looking close. It is farther vulgarized by the tree being put against it in coarse violent black, like a tyro's work, no middle tint, and the trunk of the tree is far too small for its mass of foliage. I am wrong in saying the distance is slurred; if it were, it would be more right than it is, but it is painted in coarse, large masses, without any details—not indistinct, but vacant, and therefore every way painful."]

[2] [In the Piazza di S. Spirito, Florence. Salvator Rosa's pictures there are again referred to in *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. ii. ch. ii. § 19, ch. iii. § 18 n.]

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men, than their power of being dreadful without being false or licentious.[1] In Tintoret's Murder of Abel,[2] the head of the sacrificed firstling lies in the corner of the foreground obscurely sketched in, and with the light gleaming upon its glazed eyes. There is nothing exaggerated about the head, but there is more horror got out of it, and more of death suggested by its treatment, than if he had turned all the trees of his picture into skeletons, and raised a host of demons to drive the club.

§ 12. All these errors especially shown in Claude's sketches, and concentrated in a work of G. Poussin's.

It is curious that in Salvator's sketches or etchings there is less that is wrong than in his paintings; there seems a fresher remembrance of nature about them. Not so with Claude. It is only by looking over his sketches in the British Museum, that a complete and just idea is to be formed of his capacities of error; for the feeling and arrangement of many of them are those of an advanced age, so that we can scarcely set them down for what they resemble, the work of a boy ten years old; and the drawing, being seen without any aids of tone or colour to set it off, shows in its naked falsehood.[3] The landscape of Poussin with the storm,[4] the companion to the Dido and Æneas, in the National Gallery, presents us, in the foreground tree, with a piece of atrocity which I think, to any person who candidly considers it, may save me all further trouble of demonstrating the errors of ancient art. I do not in the least suspect the picture; the tones of it, and much of the handling, are masterly;[5] yet that foreground tree comprises every conceivable violation of truth which the human hand can commit, or head invent, in drawing

[1] [*Cf. Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. iii.]

[2] [*Cf.* above, pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. § 7, p. 173, and below, § 23 *n.*]

[3] [In his diary for Jan. 12, 1844, Ruskin writes, with reference to this passage :—

"... Went into town, and met Liddell at the Brit. Mus. Looked over Elgins and Claude's sketches with him. He does not doubt them—so much the better—confirms me in my theory.]

[4] ["A Land Storm," No. 36 in the National Gallery, by G. Poussin. For another criticism of the picture, see above, p. 396.]

[5] [For "are masterly; yet that," eds. 1 and 2 read :—

"are masterly. I believe it will, some time or another, if people ever begin to think with their own heads, and see with their own eyes, be the death-warrant of Gaspar's reputation, signed with his own hand. That foreground ..."]

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a tree, except only that it is not drawn root uppermost. It has no bark, no roughness nor character of stem; its boughs do not grow out of each other, but are stuck into each other; they ramify without diminishing, diminish without ramifying, are terminated by no complicated sprays, have their leaves tied to their ends, like the heads of Dutch brooms; and finally, and chiefly, they are evidently not made of wood, but of some soft elastic substance, which the wind can stretch out as it pleases, for there is not a vestige of an angle in any one of them. *Now the fiercest wind that ever blew upon the earth could not take the angles out of the bough of a tree an inch thick.*[1] The whole bough bends together, retaining its elbows, and angles, and natural form, but affected throughout with curvature in each of its parts and joints. That part of it which was before perpendicular being bent aside, and that which was before sloping being bent into still greater inclination, the angle at which the two parts meet remains the same; or, if the strain be put in the opposite direction, the bough will break long before it loses its angle. You will find it difficult to bend the angles out of the youngest sapling, if they be marked; and absolutely impossible, with a strong bough. You may break it, but you will not destroy its angles. And if you watch a tree in the wildest storm, you will find that though all its boughs are bending, none lose their character, but the utmost shoots and sapling spray. Hence Gaspar Poussin, by his bad drawing, does not make his storm strong, but his tree weak; he does not make his gust violent, but his boughs of India-rubber.

§ 13. Impossibility of the angles of boughs being taken out of them by wind.

These laws respecting vegetation are so far more imperative than those which were stated respecting water, that the greatest artist cannot violate them without danger, because they are laws resulting from organic structure which it is always painful to see interrupted; on the other hand, they have this in common with all

§ 14. Bough-drawing of Titian.

[1] [The italics were introduced in ed. 5.]

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laws, that they may be observed with mathematical precision, yet with no right result; the disciplined eye and the life in the woods are worth more than all botanical knowledge. For there is that about the growing of the tree trunk, and that grace in its upper ramification, which cannot be taught, and which cannot even be seen but by eager watchfulness. There is not an exhibition passes, but there appear in it hundreds of elaborate paintings of trees, many of them executed from nature. For three hundred years back, trees have been drawn with affection by all the civilized nations of Europe, and yet I repeat boldly, what I before asserted,[1] that no men but Titian and Turner ever drew the stem of a tree.

Generally, I think the perception of the muscular qualities of the tree trunk incomplete, except in men who have studied the human figure; and in loose expression of those characters, the painter who can draw the living muscle seldom fails; but the thoroughly peculiar lines belonging to woody fibre can only be learned by patient forest study. And hence in all the trees of the merely historical painters, there is fault of some kind or another; commonly exaggeration of the muscular swellings, or insipidity and want of spring in curvature, or fantasticism and unnaturalness of arrangement, and especially a want of the peculiar characters of bark which express the growth and age of the tree; for bark is no mere excrescence, lifeless and external, it is a skin of especial significance in its indications of the organic form beneath; in places under the arms of the tree it wrinkles up and forms fine lines *round* the trunk, inestimable in their indication of the direction of its surface; in others, it bursts or peels longitudinally, and the rending and bursting of it are influenced in direction and degree by the undergrowth and swelling of the woody fibre, and are not a mere roughness and granulated pattern of the hide. Where there are so many points to be observed, some are almost always exaggerated, and others missed, according to the predilections of the painter. Albert Dürer[2] has given some

[1] [Above, p. 252.]
[2] [Eds. 3 and 4 read: "Rembrandt and Albert Dürer have . . . but both miss . . ."]

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splendid examples of woody structure, but misses the grace of the great lines. Titian took a larger view, yet (as before noticed), from the habit of drawing the figure, he admits too much flaccidity and bend, and sometimes makes his tree trunks look flexible like sea-weed. There is a peculiar stiffness about the curves of the wood, which separates them completely from animal curves, and which especially defies recollection or invention; it is so subtle that it escapes but too often, even in the most patient study from nature; it lies within the thickness of a pencil line. Farther, the modes of ramification of the upper branches are so varied, inventive, and graceful, that the least alteration of them, even the measure of a hair's-breadth, spoils them; and though it is sometimes possible to get rid of a troublesome bough, accidentally awkward, or in some minor respects to assist the arrangement, yet so far as the real branches are copied, the hand libels their lovely curvatures even in its best attempts to follow them.

§ 15. *Bough-drawing of Turner.*

These two characters, the woody stiffness hinted through muscular line, and the inventive grace of the upper boughs, have never been rendered except by Turner; he does not merely draw them better than others, but he is the only man who has ever drawn them at all. Of the woody character, the tree subjects of the Liber Studiorum afford marked examples; the Cephalus and Procris,[1] scenes near the Grand Chartreuse and Blair Athol, Juvenile Tricks, and Hedging and Ditching, may be particularized: in the England series, the Bolton Abbey is perhaps a more characteristic and thoroughly Turneresque example than any.

Of the arrangement of the upper boughs, the Æsacus and Hesperie[2] is perhaps the most consummate example; the absolute truth and simplicity, and freedom from everything like fantasticism or animal form, being as marked on the one hand, as the exquisite imaginativeness of the lines on the other. Among the Yorkshire subjects, the Aske Hall, Kirkby

[1] [Engraved in *Lectures on Landscape.* The drawings for these Liber Studiorum subjects are all in the National Gallery. For Bolton Abbey, cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. ix. §§ 13–15.]

[2] [Engraved in *Lectures on Landscape.*]

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Lonsdale Churchyard, and Brignall Church are the most characteristic: among the England subjects, the Warwick, Dartmouth Cove, Durham, and Chain Bridge over the Tees,[1] where the piece of thicket on the right has been well rendered by the engraver, and is peculiarly expressive of the aërial relations and play of light among complex boughs. The vignette at the opening of Rogers's Pleasures of Memory, that of Chiefswood cottage in the Illustrations to Scott's works, and the Château de la belle Gabrielle engraved for the Keepsake, are among the most graceful examples accessible to every one: the Crossing the Brook will occur at once to those acquainted with the artist's gallery. The drawing of the stems in all these instances, and indeed in all the various and frequent minor occurrences of such subject throughout the painter's works, is entirely unique; there is nothing of the same kind in art.[2]

[1] [The Yorkshire subjects here mentioned are all in Whitaker's *Richmondshire*. Of the "England" subjects, Warwick is in No. 15; Dartmouth Cove, No. 1; Durham, No. 23; Chain Bridge (engraved by W. R. Smith), No. 24. The "vignette at the opening of Rogers's 'Pleasures of Memory'" (p. 7 of the *Poems*) is "Twilight" (No. 226 N.G.). The "Chiefswood Cottage" is in vol. xviii. of Scott's *Prose Works*. For another reference to the tree-drawing in the "Gabrielle" (*Keepsake*, 1834), see above, p. 239. For "Crossing the Brook" (N.G. 497), see above, note, p. 241.]

[2] [In place of §§ 14, 15, and the beginning of § 16, eds. 1 and 2 read as follows:—

§ 13. *Unity of all truth in the works of Turner. "Crossing the Brook."*

"In passing to the works of Turner I have little more to do than to name the most characteristic pictures, for the truths I have been pointing out are so palpable and evident that the reader can decide for himself in a moment where they exist, and where they are wanting. The 'Crossing of the Brook' will probably be the first which will occur to the minds of those best acquainted with Turner's works, and indeed the stems on the extreme left of the picture, especially the fainter ones entangled behind the dark tree, and the vistas of interwoven boughs which retire in the centre, are above all praise for grace and truth. These, and the light branches on the left in the 'Mercury and Argus,' may be given as standards of the utmost possible refinement and fidelity in tree-drawing, carried out to the last fibres of the leaflets. I am desirous, however, when it is possible, to give references to engravings as well as to original works, and neither of these have been so well rendered by the engraver as a little passage of thicket on the right in the 'Chain-bridge over the Tees,' of the England series. This piece of drawing is peculiarly expressive of the complexity, entanglement, and aërial relation of which we have just been speaking. The eye is lost in its exquisite multiplicity, yet you can go through among the boughs, in and out, catching a leaf here and a sunbeam there,—now a shadow and now a stem, until you come out at the cliff on the other side, and there is not one of those countless stems at the same distance with another, not one that you do not leave behind you before you get to the next, however confused

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§ 16. *Leafage. Its variety and symmetry.*

Let us, however, pass to the leafage of the elder landscape-painters, and see if it atones for the deficiencies of the stems. One of the most remarkable characters of natural leafage is the constancy with which, while the leaves are arranged on the spray with exquisite regularity, that regularity is modified in their actual effect. For as in every group of leaves some are seen sideways, forming merely long lines, some foreshortened, some crossing each other, every one differently turned and placed from all the others, the forms of the leaves, though in themselves similar, give rise to a thousand strange and differing forms in the group; and the shadows of some, passing over the others, still

and entangled you may be with their intersections and their multitude. Compare this with Gaspar's tree in 'La Riccia,' and decide for yourself which is truth. One, infinite, graceful, penetrable, interwoven, sun-lighted, alive; the other, three brown strokes of paint, at precisely the same distance from the eye, without one intersection, without one cast shadow, and without one ramification to carry the foliage.

§ 14. *"Chiefswood Cottage," "Château de la Belle Gabrielle," etc.*

"The vignette of 'Chiefswood Cottage,' in the illustrations to Scott, is peculiarly interesting as an illustration of all that we have been saying of the tapering of trunks. One stem, on the left, is made to taper in perspective, by receding from the eye, as well as by sending off quantities of brushwood at its base, and observe how it contrasts with and sets off the forms of all the others. Look at the stems of the dark trees on the right, how they rise without the least diminution, although so tall, till they fork; note the exquisite observance of proportion in the diminution of every spray at the very instant of dividing, the inconceivable and countless complexity, depth, aërial recession, and grace of the sprays themselves. This vignette and the 'Château de la Belle Gabrielle' always appear to me about the two most finished pieces of bough-drawing that Turner has produced. We should, however, associate with them the group of waving willows in the 'Warwick' (England series), the 'Dartmouth Cove,' with its dark, gnarled trunk and delicate springing stems above the flag (also a picture to be closely studied with reference to bough-anatomy); the branching stems above the river in the 'Durham,' the noble group of full-grown trees in the 'Kelso,' and, perhaps grander than all, the tall mass of foliage in the 'Bolton Abbey.'

§ 15. *Character of leafage. Its singular irregularity.*

"Such being the truth of the stems and branches, as represented by modern painters, let us see whether they are equally faithful in foliage, and whether the old masters atone by the leaves for the errors of the stems. Nature's great aim, in arranging her leaves, as in everything else, is to get symmetry and variety together, to make the symmetry be *felt*, but only the variety *seen*. Consequently, though she ranges her leaves on their individual sprays with exquisite regularity, she always contrives to disguise that regularity in their united effect. For as in every group of leaves," etc.

For "Mercury and Argus," see p. 264 *n*. For the "Chain-bridge over the Tees," above, p. 544. For Gaspar Poussin's "La Riccia," pp. 277, 577. "Kelso" is in vol. iii. of Scott's *Poetical Works*.]

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Drawn & Etched by J Ruskin

Study of Foliage.

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farther disguise and confuse the mass, until the eye can distinguish nothing but a graceful and flexible disorder of innumerable forms, with here and there a perfect leaf on the extremity, or a symmetrical association of one or two, just enough to mark the specific character and to give unity and grace, but never enough to repeat in one group what was done in another, never enough to prevent the eye from feeling that, however regular and mathematical may be the structure of parts, what is composed out of them is as various and infinite as any other part of nature. Nor does this take place in general effect only. Break off an elm bough three feet long, in full leaf, and lay it on the table before you, and try to draw it, leaf for leaf. It is ten to one if in the whole bough (provided you do not twist it about as you work) you find one form of a leaf exactly like another; perhaps you will not even have *one* complete. Every leaf will be oblique, or foreshortened, or curled, or crossed by another, or shaded by another, or have something or other the matter with it; and though the whole bough will look graceful and symmetrical, you will scarcely be able to tell how or why it does so, since there is not one line of it like another. Now go to Gaspar Poussin and take one of his sprays where they come against the sky; you may count it all round: one, two, three, four, one bunch; five, six, seven, eight, two bunches; nine, ten, eleven, twelve, three bunches; with four leaves each; and such leaves! every one precisely the same as its neighbour, blunt and round at the end (where every forest leaf is sharp, except that of the fig-tree), tied together by the stalks,[1] and so fastened on to the demoniacal claws above described, one bunch to each claw.

§ 17. *Perfect regularity of Poussin.*

But if nature is so various when you have a bough on the table before you, what must she be when she retires from you, and gives you her whole mass and multitude? The leaves then at the extremities become as fine as dust, a mere confusion of points and lines between you and the sky, a

[1] [For "stalks," eds. 1 and 2 read, "roots"; and after "each claw" they add, "and behold a tree!"]

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confusion which, you might as well hope to draw sea-sand particle by particle, as to imitate leaf for leaf. This, as it comes down into the body of the tree, gets closer, but never opaque; it is always transparent with crumbling lights in it letting you through to the sky: then out of this, come, heavier and heavier, the masses of illumined foliage, all dazzling and inextricable, save here and there a single leaf on the extremities: then, under these, you get deep passages of broken irregular gloom, passing into transparent, green-lighted, misty hollows; the twisted stems glancing through them in their pale and entangled infinity, and the shafted sunbeams, rained from above, running along the lustrous leaves for an instant; then lost, then caught again on some emerald bank or knotted root, to be sent up again with a faint reflex on the white under-sides of dim groups of drooping foliage, the shadows of the upper boughs running in grey network down the glossy stems, and resting in quiet chequers upon the glittering earth; but all penetrable and transparent, and, in proportion, inextricable and incomprehensible, except where across the labyrinth and the mystery of the dazzling light and dream-like shadow, falls, close to us, some solitary spray, some wreath of two or three motionless large leaves, the type and embodying of all that in the rest we feel and imagine, but can never see.

§ 18. Exceeding intricacy of nature's foliage.

Now, with thus much of nature in your mind, go to Gaspar Poussin's view near Albano, in the National Gallery.[1] It is the very subject to unite all these effects, a sloping bank shaded with intertwined forest. And what has Gaspar given us? A mass of smooth, opaque, varnished brown, without one interstice, one change of hue, or any vestige of leafy structure, in its interior, or in those parts of it, I should say, which are intended to represent interior; but out of it, over it rather, at regular intervals, we have circular groups of greenish touches, always the same in size, shape, and distance from each other,

§ 19. How contradicted by the tree-patterns of G. Poussin.

[1] [See above, § 7, p. 577.]

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containing so exactly the same number of touches each, that you cannot tell one from another. There are eight or nine and thirty of them, laid over each other like fish-scales; the shade being most carefully made darker and darker as it recedes from each until it comes to the edge of the next, against which it cuts in the same sharp circular line, and then begins to decline again, until the canvas is covered, with about as much intelligence or feeling of art as a house-painter has in marbling a wainscot, or a weaver in repeating an ornamental pattern. What is there in this, which the most determined prejudice in favour of the old masters can for a moment suppose to resemble trees? It is exactly what the most ignorant beginner, trying to make a complete drawing, would lay down; exactly the conception of trees which we have in the works of our worst drawing-masters, where the shade is laid on with the black lead and stump, and every human power exerted to make it look like a kitchen-grate well polished.

§ 20. *How followed by Creswick.*

Oppose to this the drawing even of our somewhat inferior tree-painters. I will not insult Harding by mentioning his work after it, but take Creswick,[1] for instance, and match one of his sparkling bits of green leafage with this tree-pattern of Poussin's. I do not say there is not a dignity and impressiveness about the old landscape, owing to its simplicity; and I am very far from calling Creswick's good tree-painting; it is false in colour and deficient in mass and freedom, and has many other defects, but it is the work of a man who has sought earnestly for truth: and who, with one thought or memory of nature in his heart, could look at the two landscapes, and receive Poussin's with ordinary patience? Take Creswick in black and white, where he is unembarrassed by his fondness for pea-green, the illustrations, for instance, to the Nut-brown Maid, in the Book of English Ballads.[2] Look at the intricacy and

[1] [Thomas Creswick, R.A. (1811–1869). *Cf.* below, § 34, and *Academy Notes*, 1855 (*s.* Nos. 94, 240); 1857 (*s.* No. 219). In these later references, Ruskin was less appreciative of Creswick's work.]

[2] [*The Book of British Ballads*, edited by S. C. Hall, 1842. Creswick's design for the Nut Brown Maid is on p. 89.]

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fulness of the dark oak foliage where it bends over the brook; see how you can go through it, and into it, and come out behind it to the quiet bit of sky. Observe the grey aërial transparency of the stunted copse on the left, and the entangling of the boughs where the light near foliage detaches itself. Above all, note the forms of the masses of light. Not things like scales or shells, sharp at the edge and flat in the middle, but irregular and rounded, stealing in and out accidentally from the shadow, and presenting in general outline, as the masses of all trees do, a resemblance to the specific forms of the leaves of which they are composed. Turn over the page, and look into the weaving of the foliage and sprays against the dark night-sky, how near they are, yet how untraceable; see how the moonlight creeps up underneath them, trembling and shivering on the silver boughs above; note, also, the descending bit of ivy on the left, of which only two leaves are made out, and the rest is confusion, or tells only in the moonlight like faint flakes of snow.

§ 21. *Perfect unity in nature's foliage.*

But nature observes another principle in her foliage more important even than its intricacy. She always secures an exceeding harmony and repose. She is *so* intricate that her minuteness of parts becomes to the eye, at a little distance, one united veil or cloud of leaves, to destroy the evenness of which is perhaps a greater fault than to destroy its transparency. Look at Creswick's oak again, in its dark parts. Intricate as it is, all is blended into a cloud-like harmony of shade, which becomes fainter and fainter, as it retires, with the most delicate flatness and unity of tone. And it is by this kind of vaporescence, so to speak, by this flat misty unison of parts, that nature, and her faithful followers, are enabled to keep the eye in perfect repose in the midst of profusion, and to display beauty of form, wherever they choose, to the greatest possible advantage, by throwing it across some quiet visionary passage of dimness and rest.

It is here that Hobbima and Both fail.[1] They can paint

[1] [For Hobbima, *cf.* above, pp. 339, 498, 524, and *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. ii. § 4, vol. v. pt. vi. ch. v. § 8; for Both, *cf.* above, p. 482 *n.*]

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oak leafage faithfully, but do not know where to stop, and by doing too much, lose the truth of all, lose the very truth of detail at which they aim, for all their minute work only gives two leaves to nature's twenty. They are evidently incapable of even thinking of a tree, much more of drawing it, except leaf by leaf; they have no notion nor sense of simplicity, mass, or obscurity, and when they come to distance, where it is totally impossible that leaves should be separately seen, being incapable of conceiving or rendering the grand and quiet forms of truth, they are reduced to paint their bushes with dots and touches expressive of leaves three feet broad each.[1] Nevertheless there is a genuine aim in their works, and their failure is rather to be attributed to ignorance of art, than to such want of sense for nature as we find in Claude or Poussin: and when they come close home, we sometimes receive from them fine passages of mechanical truth.

§ 22. Total want of it in Both and Hobbima.

But let us oppose to their works the group of trees on the left in Turner's Marly.* We have there perfect and ceaseless intricacy to oppose to Poussin, perfect and unbroken repose to oppose to Hobbima; and in the unity of these the perfection of truth. This group may be taken as a fair standard of Turner's tree-painting. We have in it the admirably drawn stems, instead of the claws or the serpents; full, transparent, boundless intricacy, instead of the shell pattern; and misty depth of intermingled light and leafage, instead of perpetual repetition of one mechanical touch.

§ 23. How rendered by Turner.

I have already spoken (Section II. Chapter V. § 15) of the way in which mystery and intricacy are carried even into the nearest leaves of the foreground, and noticed the want of

* This group I have before noticed as singularly (but, I doubt not, accidentally, and in consequence of the love of the two great painters for the same grand forms) resembling that introduced by Tintoret in the background of his Cain and Abel.[2]

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 here add note, "Compare sec. ii. ch. iv. § 16."]
[2] [See above, p. 173. The footnote was first added in ed. 3.]

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such intricacy even in the best works of the old masters. Claude's are particularly deficient, for by representing every particular leaf of them, or trying to do so, he makes nature finite; and even his nearest bits of leafage are utterly false, for they have neither shadows modifying their form (compare Section II. Chapter III. § 7) nor sparkling lights, nor confused intersections of their own forms and lines; and the perpetual repetition of the same shape of leaves and the same arrangement, relieved from a black ground, is more like an ornamental pattern for dress than the painting of a foreground. Nevertheless, the foliage of Claude, in his middle distances, is the finest and truest part of his pictures, and on the whole, affords the best example of good drawing to be found in ancient art. It is always false in colour, and has not boughs enough amongst it, and the stems commonly look a great deal nearer than any part of it, but it is still graceful, flexible, abundant, intricate; and, in all but colour and connection with stems, very nearly right. Of the perfect painting of thick leafy foreground, Turner's Mercury and Argus, and Oakhampton, are the standards.*

§ 24. The near leafage of Claude. His middle distances are good.

The last and most important truth to be observed respecting trees is, that their boughs always, in finely grown individuals, bear among themselves such a ratio of length as to describe with their extremities a symmetrical curve, constant for each species; and within this curve all the irregularities, segments, and divisions of the tree are included, each bough reaching the

§ 25. Universal termination of trees in symmetrical curves.

* The above paragraphs I have left as originally written, because they are quite true as far as they reach; but, like many other portions of this essay, they take in a very small segment of the truth. I shall not add to them at present, because I can explain my meaning better in our consideration of the laws of beauty; but the reader must bear in mind that what is above stated refers, throughout, to large masses of foliage seen under broad sunshine, and it has especial reference to Turner's enormous scale of scene, and intense desire of light. In twilight, when tree forms are seen against sky, other laws come into operation, as well as in subject of narrow limits and near fore-

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limit with its extremity, but not passing it. When a tree is perfectly grown, each bough starts from the trunk with just so much wood as, allowing for constant ramification, will enable it to reach the terminal line; or if, by mistake, it start with too little, it will proceed without ramifying till within a distance where it may safely divide; if on the contrary it start with too much, it will ramify quickly and constantly; or, to express the real operation more accurately, each bough growing on so as to keep even with its neighbours, takes so much wood from the trunk as is sufficient to enable it to do so, more or less in proportion as it ramifies fast or slowly. In badly grown trees the boughs are apt to fall short of the curve, or at least there are so many jags and openings that its symmetry is interrupted; and in young trees, the impatience of the upper shoots frequently breaks the line: but, in perfect and mature trees, every bough does its duty completely, and the line of curve is quite filled up, and the mass within it unbroken, so that the tree assumes the shape of a dome as in the oak, or, in tall trees, of a pear with the stalk downmost. The old masters paid no attention whatsoever to this great principle. They swing their boughs about, anywhere and everywhere; each stops or goes on just as it likes; nor will it be possible, in any of their works, to find a single

§ 26. Altogether unobserved by the old masters. Always given by Turner.

ground. It is, I think, to be regretted that Turner does not in his Academy pictures sometimes take more confined and gloomy subjects, like that grand one, near the Chartreuse, of the Liber Studiorum, wherein his magnificent power of elaborating close foliage might be developed; but, for the present, let the reader, with respect to what has been here said of close foliage, note the drawing of the leaves in that plate, in the Æsacus and Hesperie, in the Cephalus, and the elaboration of the foregrounds in the Yorkshire drawings; let him compare what is said of Turner's foliage painting above in Part II. Sect. I. Chap. VII. §§ 40, 41, and of Titian's previously, as well as Part III. Sect. I. Chap. VIII., and Sect. II. Chap. IV. § 21. I shall hereafter endeavour to arrange the subject in a more systematic manner, but what additional observations I may have to make will none of them be in any wise more favourable to Gaspar, Salvator, or Hobbima, than the above paragraphs.[1]

[1] [Note first added in ed. 3. See vol. v. pt. vi., "Of Leaf Beauty."]

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example in which any symmetrical curve is indicated by the extremities.*

But I need scarcely tell any one in the slightest degree acquainted with the works of Turner, how rigidly and constantly he adheres to this principle of nature; taking in his highest compositions the perfect ideal form, every spray being graceful and varied in itself, but inevitably terminating at the assigned limit, and filling up the curve without break or gap; in his lower works, taking less perfect form but invariably hinting the constant tendency in all; and thus, in spite of his abundant complexity, he arranges his trees under simpler and grander forms than any other artist, even among the moderns.[1]

§ 27. *Foliage painting on the Continent.*

It was above asserted that J. D. Harding is, after Turner, the greatest master of foliage in Europe; I ought, however, to state that my knowledge of the modern landscape of Germany is very limited, and that, even with respect to France and Italy, I judge rather from the general tendency of study and character of mind visible in the annual Exhibition of the Louvre, and in some galleries of modern paintings at Milan, Venice, and Florence, than from any detailed acquaintance with the works of their celebrated painters. Yet I think I can hardly be mistaken. I have seen nothing to induce me to take a closer survey; no life, knowledge, or emotion in any quarter; nothing but the meanest and most ignorant copyism of vulgar details, coupled

* Perhaps, in some instances, this may be the case with the trees of Nicolas Poussin; but even with him the boughs only touch the line of limit with their central *points* of extremity, and are not *sectors* of the great curve, forming a part of it with expanded extremities, as in nature. Draw a few straight lines from the centre to the circumference of a circle. The forms included between them are the forms of the individual boughs of a fine tree, with all their ramifications; only the external curve is not a circle, but more frequently two parabolas (which, I believe, it is in the oak), or an ellipse. But each bough of the old masters is club-shaped, and broadest, not at the outside of the tree, but a little way towards its centre.

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 add :—
"The tree in the 'Mercury and Argus' is the most perfect example I remember of the pure ideal form."]

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with a style of conception resembling that of the various lithographic ideals on the first leaves of the music of pastoral ballads. An exception ought, however, to be made in favour of French etching; some studies in black and white may be seen in the narrow passages of the Louvre of very high merit, showing great skill and delicacy of execution, and most determined industry (in fact, I think when the French artist fails, it is never through fear of labour); nay, more than this, some of them exhibit acute perception of landscape character and great power of reaching simple impressions of gloom, wildness, sound, and motion. Some of their illustrated works also exhibit these powers in a high degree; there are a spirit, fire, and sense of reality about some of the wood-cuts to the large edition of Paul and Virginia,[1] and a determined rendering of separate feeling in each, such as we look for in vain in our own ornamental works.* But the French appear to have no teaching such as might carry them beyond this; their entire ignorance of colour renders the assumption of the brush instantly fatal, and the false, forced, and impious sentiment of the nation renders anything like grand composition altogether impossible.[2]

It is therefore only among good artists of our own school

* On the other hand, nothing can be more exquisitely ridiculous than the French illustrations of a second or third rate order, as those to the Harmonies of Lamartine.[3]

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[1] [*Paul et Virginie*, par J. H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Paris: L. Curmer, 1838.]

[2] [From here to the end of the chapter is omitted in eds. 1 and 2, which contain instead the two following sections and footnote:—

"Let me then close the investigation of the truth of nature with this link between the true and the beautiful, for we may always assume that the ideal or perfect form of any object is the most beautiful it can possibly assume, and that it can be only diseased taste in us, which dislikes it, if we ever find ourselves doing so. And I shall prove hereafter that this perfect form of trees is not only the most beautiful which *they* can assume, but one of the most perfect which can be presented to the eye by any means or object. And especially in foliage, nothing can be true which is not beautiful, so that we shall be far better able to trace the essential qualities of truth in tree-drawing, and especially the particular power of Turner, when we are able to speak of grace as well as advocacy.

§ 26. *Connection in foliage between truth and beauty.*

"We have before expressed our admiration of the works of J. D. Harding

[3] [The reference is apparently to the illustration (by Alfred Johannot) on the title-page of *Harmoniés Poétiques et Religieuses*, par Alphonse de Lamartine, Paris 1830.]

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that I think any fair comparison can be instituted, and I wish to assert Harding's knowledge of foliage more distinctly, because he neither does justice to himself, nor is, I think, rightly estimated by his fellow artists. I shall not make any invidious remarks respecting individuals, but I think it necessary to state generally, that the style of foliage-painting chiefly characteristic of the pictures on the line of the Royal Academy is of the most degraded kind;* and that, except Turner and Mulready, we have, as far as I know, *no Royal Academician* capable of painting even the smallest portion of foliage in

§ 28. *Foliage of J. D. Harding. Its deficiencies.*

* Of Stanfield's foliage I remember too little to enable me to form any definite judgment; it is a pity that he so much neglects this noble element of landscape.

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for general drawing of trees, and we may once again refer to them as an illustration of every truth we have been pointing out in foliage. We only wish they were carried a little farther and finer. We should enjoy a little more of the making out which we find in Claude's foreground, to give greater value to his brilliant execution; and we should like a little more attention paid to specific character of trees, and to the designing of the boughs. Harding's boughs are always *right*, always flexible and growing; but they are not always so put together that we wonder how anything so beautiful could ever have been conceived. There is not a distinct design of perfect beauty in every spray, which there always is in nature.

§ 27. *Foliage of Harding, Fielding, and other modern painters.*

"Callcott's foliage is very refined and ideal, very faultless, though apt to be dreadfully cold in colour. Stanfield is sometimes awkward, though not exactly wrong; he inserted his stone-pine into the road at Pozzuoli like a sign-post. Copley Fielding is very wild, intricate, and graceful, wanting only in dignity; he should also remember that leaves, here and there, both have and show sharp edges. Creswick I have already noticed. Cattermole is very grand in his conception of form; and many others of our water-colour painters have produced instructive passages."*

* "It may not, perhaps, be out of place to protest against the mode in which the foliage is executed in Mr. Moon's publication of Roberts' Eastern Sketches. So magnificent a work should have been put only into first-rate hands, and there is much about it unsatisfactory in every way; partly from attempting too much, but chiefly from the incapability of the hands employed on the landscape. No one but Harding should have executed the foliage; and, at any rate, a good draughtsman should have been secured for the foregrounds. I know not whose work they are; but they are a libel on Mr. Roberts, whose foliage is always beautiful and artistical, if not very carefully studied."

The book referred to is *The Holy Land . . . from drawings made on the spot by David Roberts, R.A., with historical descriptions by Rev. G. Croly.* London: F. G. Moon, Threadneedle Street, 2 vols., 1842. Ruskin's name appears in the list of subscribers to the work. The lithographs were by Louis Haghe. Roberts' adventures are described in a preliminary "Notice of Mr. Roberts's Journey in the East" (see above, pp. 223, 224 n.),

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a dignified or correct manner;* all is lost in green shadows with glittering yellow lights, white trunks with black patches on them, and leaves of no species in particular. Much laborious and clever foliage-drawing is to be found in the rooms of the New Water-Colour Society;† but we have no one in any wise comparable to Harding for power of expression in a sketch from nature, or for natural and unaffected conception in the study.

Maintaining for him this high position, it is necessary that I should also state those deficiencies which appear to me to conceal his real power, and in no small degree to prevent his progress.[1]

§ 29. His brilliancy of execution too manifest.

His over-fondness for brilliant execution I have already noticed. He is fonder of seeing something tolerably like a tree produced with few touches, than something very like a tree produced with many. Now, it is quite allowable that occasionally, and in portions of his picture, a great artist should indulge himself in this luxury of sketching; yet it is a perilous luxury, it blunts the feeling and weakens the hand. I have said enough in various places respecting the virtues of negligence and of finish (compare above the Chapter on Ideas of Power in Part I. Sect. II., and Part III. Sect. I. Ch. X. § 4), and I need only say here, therefore, that Harding's foliage

* The Pre-Raphaelite brethren, as they unfortunately call themselves (I heartily wish they would be content to paint well without calling themselves names), are not, I think, as yet any of them Academicians. Their foliage, like the rest of the accessaries in their paintings, is inimitable in its parts, but as yet imperfectly generalized.[2]

† I ought especially to name the quiet and correct studies of Mr. Davidson and Mr. Bennett.[3]

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[1] [See above, note on § 8, and for Harding's "over-fondness for brilliant execution," p. 201.]

[2] [Note first added in ed. 5 (1851). For another reference to the name "Pre-Raphaelite," see below, p. 621; and cf. *Arrows of the Chace*, ed. 1880, i. 89. It was in this year (1851) that Ruskin took up the defence of their work, in his letters to the *Times* and in the pamphlet entitled *Pre-Raphaelitism*.]

[3] [Note first added in ed. 5. For another reference to the "true and modest" drawings of Charles Davidson, see *Academy Notes*, 1857; there are several example in the Victoria and Albert (South Kensington) Museum. William Bennett (1811–1871) was a constant exhibitor at the New Water-Colour Society; there is a reference to him in the notice of that Society (*s.* No. 114) in *Academy Notes*, 1858. There is a drawing by him in the Tate Gallery, No. 1722.]

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is never sufficiently finished, and has at its best the look of a rapid sketch from nature touched upon at home. In 1848 (I think), there was a pretty drawing in the rooms of the Water-Colour Society,[1] the clear green water of a torrent resting among stones, with copse-like wood on each side, a bridge in the distance, a white flower (water-lily?) catching the eye in front; the tops of the trees on the left of this picture were mere broad blots of colour dashed upon the sky and connected by stems. I allow the power necessary to attain any look of foliage by such means, but it is power abused: by no such means can the higher virtue and impressiveness of foliage be rendered. In the use of body colour for near leaves, his execution is also too hasty; often the touches are mere square or round dots, which can be understood only for foliage by their arrangement. This fault was especially marked in the trees of his picture painted for the Academy two years ago;[2] they were very nearly shapeless, and could not stand even by courtesy for walnut leaves, for which, judging by the make of the tree, they must have been intended.

§ 30. His bough-drawing and choice of form.

His drawing of boughs is, in all points of demonstrable law, right, and very frequently easy and graceful also; yet it has two eminent faults; the first, that the flow of the bough is sacrificed to its texture, the pencil checking itself and hesitating at dots, and stripes, and knots, instead of following the grand and unbroken tendency of growth; the second, that however good the arrangement may be as far as regards the mere flexibility, intricacy, and freedom, there are none of those composed groups of line which are unfailing in nature. Harding's work is not grand enough to be natural. The drawings in the Park and the Forest[3] are, I believe, almost facsimiles of sketches made from nature; yet it is evident at once that in all of them nothing but the general line and disposition of the boughs has been taken from the tree, and

[1] [No. 353 in the Society's exhibition of that year: "Killin, Scotland."]
[2] [Probably No. 539 in the Academy of 1843: "Pont d'Ai (? Ael), Val d'Aosta."]
[3] [See above, p. 578 n.]

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that no single branch or spray has been faithfully copied or patiently studied.

This want of close study necessarily causes several deficiencies of feeling respecting general form. Harding's choice is always of tree forms comparatively imperfect, leaning this way and that, and unequal in the lateral arrangements of foliage. Such forms are often graceful, always picturesque, but rarely grand; and, when systematically adopted, untrue. It requires more patient study than any he has lately gone through, to attain just feeling of the dignity and character of a purely formed tree with all its symmetries perfect.

§ 31. Local colour, how far expressible in black and white, and with what advantage.

One more cause of incorrectness I may note, though it is not peculiar to the artist's tree-drawing, but attaches to his general system of sketching. In Harding's valuable work on the use of the Lead Pencil,[1] there is one principle advanced which I believe to be false and dangerous; namely, that the local colour of objects is not to be rendered by the pencil. I think the instance given is that of some baskets, whose dark colour is rendered solely by the touches indicating the wickerwork. Now I believe that an essential difference between the sketch of a great and of a comparatively inferior master is, that the former is conceived entirely in shade and colour, and its masses are blocked out with reference to both, while the inferior draughtsman checks at textures and petty characters of object. If Rembrandt had had to sketch such baskets, he would have troubled himself very little about the wickerwork; but he would have looked to see where they came dark or light on the sand, and where there were any sparkling points of light on the wet osiers. These darks and lights he would have scratched in with the fastest lines he could, leaving no white paper but at the wet points of lustre; if he had had

[1] [For another reference to this work, see *Letters to a College Friend*, v. § 5, Vol. I. p. 428. The passage here referred to is at p. 72 of the book: "The Lead Pencil does not imitate local colour well without much labour; and unless done with judgment, it should never be attempted. The student may find through the various drawings in this book . . . that the *light* parts of all objects are left *white*. . . . So with the Baskets, in Pl. 26, which are darker than the Fish, from the greater number of strokes required to give the meshes on the light shade."]

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time, the wickerwork would have come afterwards.* And I think that the first thing to be taught to any pupil is, neither how to manage the pencil, nor how to attain the character of outline, but rather to see where things are light and where they are dark, and to draw them as he sees them, never caring whether his lines be dexterous or slovenly. The result of such study is the immediate substitution of downright drawing for symbolism, and afterwards a judicious moderation in the use of extreme lights and darks; for where local colours are really drawn, so much of what seems violently dark is found to come light against something else, and so much of what seems high light to come dark against the sky, that the draughtsman trembles at finding himself plunged either into blackness or whiteness, and seeks, as he should, for means of obtaining force without either.

It is in consequence of his evident habit of sketching more with a view to detail and character than to the great masses, that Harding's chiaroscuro is frequently crude, scattered, and petty. Black shadows occur under his distant trees, white high lights on his foreground rocks, the foliage and trunks are divided by violent opposition into separate masses, and the branches lose, in spots of moss and furrowings of bark, their soft roundings of delicate form and their grand relations to each other and the sky.

§ 32. Opposition between great manner and great knowledge.

It is owing to my respect for the artist, and my belief in his power and conscientious desire to do what is best, that I have thus extended these somewhat unkind remarks. On the other hand, it is to be remembered, that his knowledge of nature is most extensive, and his dexterity of drawing most instructive, especially considering his range of subjects; for whether in water, rock, or foliage, he is equally skilful in attaining whatever

* It is true that many of Rembrandt's etchings are merely in line, but it may be observed that the subject is universally *conceived* in light and shade, and that the lines are either merely guides in the arrangement, or an exquisite indication of the keynotes of shade, on which the after system of it is to be based, portions of fragmentary finish showing the completeness of the conception.

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he desires (though he does not always desire all that he ought); and artists should keep in mind, that neither grandeur of manner nor truth of system can atone for the want of this knowledge and this skill. Constable's manner was good and great, but being unable to *draw* even a log of wood,[1] much more a trunk of a tree or a stone, he left his works destitute of substance, mere studies of effect without any expression of specific knowledge; and thus even what is great in them has been productive, I believe, of much injury, in its encouragement of the most superficial qualities of the English school.

§ 33. *Foliage of Cox, Fielding, and Cattermole.*

The foliage of David Cox has been already noticed (preface to second edition).[2] It is altogether exquisite in colour, and in its impressions of coolness, shade, and mass; of its drawing I cannot say anything, but that I should be sorry to see it better. Copley Fielding's is remarkable for its intricacy and elegance; it is, however, not free from affectation, and, as it has been before remarked, is always evidently composed in the study. The execution is too rough and woolly; it is wanting in simplicity, sharpness, and freshness, above all in specific character; not, however, in his middle distances, where the rounded masses of forest and detached blasted trunks of fir are usually very admirable. Cattermole has very grand conceptions of general form, but wild and without substance, and therefore incapable of long maintaining their attractiveness, especially lately, the execution having become in the last degree coarse and affected.[3]

Hunt, I think, fails in foliage, and in foliage only; fails, as the daguerreotype does, from over-fidelity; for foliage will *not* be imitated, it must be reasoned out and suggested: yet Hunt is the only man we have who can paint the real

[1] [See above, p. 191.]
[2] [§ 40 *n.*, p. 46.]
[3] [Eds. 3 and 4 add:—
"This is bitterly to be regretted, for few of our artists would paint foliage better, if he would paint it from nature, and with reverence."
For other references to Cattermole, see above, pp. 46, 220, 397 *n.*]

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leaf-green under sunlight, and in this respect his trees are delicious, summer itself.[1] Creswick has sweet feeling, and tries for the real green too, but, from want of science in his shadows, ends in green paint instead of green light; in mere local colour, instead of colour raised by sunshine. One example is enough to show where the fault lies. In his picture of the Weald of Kent, exhibited some years ago in the British Institution, there was a cottage in the middle distance with white walls and a red roof. The dark sides of the white walls and of the roof were of the same colour, a dark purple; wrong for both. Repeated inaccuracies of this kind necessarily deprive even the most brilliant colour of all appearance of sunshine, and they are much to be deprecated in Creswick, as he is one of the very few artists who *do* draw from nature, and try for nature. Some of his thickets and torrent-beds are most painfully studied, and yet he cannot draw a bow nor a stone. I suspect he is too much in the habit of studying only large views on the spot, and not of drawing small portions thoroughly. I trust it will be seen that these, as all other remarks that I have made throughout this volume on particular works, are not in depreciation of, or unthankfulness for, what the artist has done, but in the desire that he should do himself more justice and more honour.[2]

§ 34. Hunt and Creswick. Green, how to be rendered expressive of light, and offensive if otherwise.

[1] [For William Hunt, see *Notes on Prout and Hunt*, and *cf.* below, ch. iii. § 5, p. 616.]

[2] [Eds. 3 and 4 add a further sentence and paragraph thus:—

"I have much pleasure in Creswick's works, and I am always glad to see them admired by others.

"I shall conclude this sketch of the foliage art of England, by mention of two artists, whom I believe to be representative of a considerable class, admirable in their reverence and patience of study, yet unappreciated by the public, because they do what is unrecommended by dexterities of handling. The forest studies of J. Linnell are peculiarly elaborate, and, in many points, most skilful: they fail, perhaps, of interest, owing to the overfulness of detail and a want of generalization in the effect; but even a little more of the Harding sharpness of touch would set off their sterling qualities, and make them felt. A less known artist, S. Palmer, lately admitted a member of the Old Water-Colour Society, is deserving of the very highest place among faithful followers of nature. His studies of foreign foliage especially are beyond all praise for care and fulness. I have never seen a stone-pine or a cypress drawn except by him; and his feeling is as pure and grand as his

§ 35. Conclusion. Works of J. Linnell and S. Palmer.

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fidelity is exemplary. He has not, however, yet, I think, discovered what is necessary and unnecessary in a great picture; and his works, sent to the Society's rooms, have been most unfavourable examples of his power, and have been generally, as yet, in places where all that is best in them is out of sight. I look to him, nevertheless, unless he lose himself in over reverence for certain conventionalisms of the older schools, as one of the probable renovators and correctors of whatever is failing or erroneous in the practice of English art."

To John Linnell (1792–1882) Ruskin paid a fuller tribute in vol. ii. of *Modern Painters* (Addenda); and *cf.* above, p. 391 *n.* Samuel Palmer (1805–1881) was Linnell's son-in-law. He was elected a member of the Etching Club, 1853; of the Old Water-Colour Society in 1855. For a reference to a drawing of his exhibited there in 1858, see *Academy Notes* for that year.]

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CHAPTER II

GENERAL REMARKS RESPECTING THE TRUTH OF TURNER

§ 1. No necessity of entering into discussion of architectural truth.

WE have now arrived at some general conception of the extent of Turner's knowledge, and the truth of his practice, by the deliberate examination of the characteristics of the four great elements of landscape,—sky, earth, water, and vegetation. I have not thought it necessary to devote a chapter to architecture, because enough[1] has been said on this subject in Part II. Sec. I. Chap. VII.; and its general truths, which are those with which the landscape painter, as such, is chiefly concerned, require only a simple and straightforward application of those

[1] ["Because enough . . . disgraceful," eds. 1 and 2 here read thus (the "architectural episode" at pp. 202–226 was added in the 3rd ed.):—

"because there is nothing in the nature of the thing itself, with which the ordinary observer is not sufficiently acquainted to be capable of forming a pretty accurate judgment of the truth of its representation; and the difference between one artist and another, in architectural drawing, does not depend so much upon knowledge of actual form, in which it is here impossible grossly to err, as on the representation of that form with more able application of the general laws of chiaroscuro and colour, or with greater precision and delicacy of execution. The difference between Roberts and Turner, as architectural draughtsmen, does not depend on any greater knowledge in one or another of the channelling of triglyphs, or the curvature of volutes, but on the application of general principles of art to develop and adorn such truths. The execution which is good and desirable in drawing a stone on the ground channelled by frost is equally good and desirable in drawing a stone in a building channelled by the chisel. He who can do the one can far more easily do the other, for architecture requires only a simple and straightforward application of those rules of which every other material object of a landscape has required a most difficult and complicated application. Consequently its general truths are within the reach of even the most inferior draughtsmen, and are at the fingers' ends of every engineer's apprentice. It is disgraceful to misrepresent them, but it is no honour to draw them well. It is disgraceful," etc.]

§ 2. Because dependent only on the artist's mode of execution, and knowledge of general principles.

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rules of which every other material object of a landscape has required a most difficult and complicated application. Turner's knowledge of perspective probably adds to his power in the arrangement of every order of subject; but ignorance on this head is rather disgraceful than knowledge meritorious. It is disgraceful, for instance, that any man should commit such palpable and atrocious errors in ordinary perspective as are seen in the quay in Claude's sea-piece, No. 14 National Gallery, or in the curved portico of No. 30;[1] but still these are not points to be taken into consideration as having anything to do with artistical rank, just as, though we should say it was disgraceful if a great poet could not spell, we should not consider such a defect as in any way taking from his poetical rank. Neither is there anything particularly belonging to architecture, as such, which it is any credit to an artist to observe or represent; it is only a simple and clear field for the manifestation of his knowledge of general laws. Any surveyor or engineer could have drawn the steps and balustrade in the Hero and Leander,[2] as well as Turner has; but there is no man living but himself who could have thrown the accidental shadows upon them.[3] I may, however, refer, for general illustration of Turner's power as an architectural draughtsman, to the front of Rouen Cathedral, engraved in the Rivers of France,[4] and to the Ely in the England. I know nothing in art which can be set beside the former of these

[1] [No. 14, "Seaport: the Queen of Sheba," for which see above, pp. 106, 317; No. 30, "Seaport: St. Ursula," for which see above, p. 348.]

[2] [See above, p. 242 *n.*]

[3] [Eds. 1 and 2 here begin a new paragraph, and read thus:—

"I may, however, refer to what has been already said upon the subject in sec. ii. ch. iv. §§ 6, 12, 13 (and note), and 14, and I may point for . . . intricacy of parts. The 'Modern Italy' may be adduced as a standard of the drawing of architectural distance. But so much of the excellence of all these pictures depends, partly on considerations of principles of beauty, not yet developed, partly on expression of local character, and yet systematized illustration of part by part, of which we cannot yet take cognizance, that we should only do harm by entering on close criticism of their works at present. I have, then, only. . ."

§ 3. *Notice of a few characteristic examples of Turner's architecture.*

For the "Modern Italy," see above p. 243.]

[4] [Plate 14 in *The Seine and the Loire;* the original drawing is No. 133 in the National Gallery. Ely Cathedral was in No. 16 of *England and Wales.*]

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for overwhelming grandeur and simplicity of effect, and inexhaustible intricacy of parts. I have then only a few remarks farther to offer respecting the general character of all those truths which we have been hitherto endeavouring to explain and illustrate.

§ 2. Extreme difficulty of illustrating or explaining the highest truth.

The difference in accuracy between the lines of the Torso of the Vatican (the "Master" of M. Angelo),[1] and those in one of M. Angelo's finest works, could perhaps scarcely be appreciated by any eye or feeling undisciplined by the most perfect and practical anatomical knowledge. It rests on points of so traceless and refined delicacy, that though we feel them in the result, we cannot follow them in the details. Yet they are such and so great as to place the Torso alone in art, solitary and supreme; while the finest of M. Angelo's works, considered with respect to truth alone, are said to be only on a level with antiques of the second class, under the Apollo and Venus, that is, two classes or grades below the Torso. But suppose the best sculptor in the world, possessing the most entire appreciation of the excellence of the Torso, were to sit down, pen in hand, to try and tell us wherein the peculiar truth of each line consisted. Could any words that he could use make us feel the hair's-breadth of depth and curve on which all depends; or end in anything more than bare assertions of the inferiority of this line to that, which, if we did not perceive for ourselves, no explanation could ever illustrate to us? He might as well endeavour to explain to us by words some scent or flavour, or other subject of sense, of which we had no experience. And so it is with all truths of the highest order; they are separated from those of average precision by points of extreme delicacy, which none but the

[1] [The Torso of Heracles, known as the "Belvedere Torso," by Apollonius, son of Nestor of Athens, as we learn by a Greek inscription on the rock on which the figure sits. It was the subject of Michael Angelo's constant study, and of enthusiastic rhapsody by Winckelmann. Modern criticism hardly sustains the note of supreme admiration, here echoed by Ruskin. He cites it again, as a standard of "supreme qualities" in sculpture, in *Deucalion*, ch. i. § 2. The torso is No. 126 in W. Helbig's *Guide to the Collections of Classical Antiquities in Rome*, 1895.]

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cultivated eye can in the least feel, and to express which, all words are absolutely meaningless and useless. Consequently, in all that I have been saying of the truth of artists, I have been able to point out only coarse, broad, and explicable matters; I have been perfectly unable to express (and indeed I have made no endeavour to express) the finely drawn and distinguished truth in which all the real excellence of art consists. All those truths which I have been able to explain and demonstrate in Turner, are such as any artist of ordinary powers of observation ought to be capable of rendering. It is disgraceful to omit them; but it is no very great credit to observe them. I have indeed proved that they have been neglected, and disgracefully so, by those men who are commonly considered the Fathers of Art; but in showing that they have been observed by Turner, I have only proved him to be *above* other men in knowledge of truth, I have not given any conception of his own positive rank as a Painter of Nature. But it stands to reason, that the men, who in broad, simple, and demonstrable matters are perpetually violating truth, will not be particularly accurate or careful in carrying out delicate and refined and undemonstrable matters; and it stands equally to reason that the man, who, as far as argument or demonstration can go, is found invariably truthful, will, in all probability, be truthful to the last line, and shadow of a line. And such is, indeed, the case with every touch of this consummate artist; the essential excellence, all that constitutes the real and exceeding value of his works, is beyond and above expression: it is a truth inherent in every line, and breathing in every hue, too delicate and exquisite to admit of any kind of proof, nor to be ascertained except by the highest of tests, the keen feeling attained by extended knowledge and long study. Two lines are laid on canvas; one is right and another wrong. There is no difference between them appreciable by the compasses, none appreciable by the ordinary eye, none which can be pointed out, if it is not seen.

§ 3. The positive rank of Turner is in no degree shown in the foregoing pages, but only his relative rank.

§ 4. The exceeding refinement of his truth.

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One person feels it, another does not; but the feeling or sight of the one can by no words be communicated to the other:—that feeling[1] and sight have been the reward of years of labour.[2] There is no test of our acquaintance with nature so absolute and unfailing, as the degree of admiration we feel for Turner's painting. Precisely as we are shallow in our knowledge, vulgar in our feeling, and contracted in our views of principles, will the works of this artist be stumbling-blocks or foolishness to us: precisely in the degree in which we are familiar with nature, constant in our observation of her, and enlarged in our understanding of her, will they expand before our eyes into glory and beauty. In every new insight which we obtain into the works of God, in every new idea which we receive from His creation, we shall find ourselves possessed of an interpretation and a guide to something in Turner's works which we had not before understood. We may range over Europe, from shore to shore; and from every rock that we tread upon, every sky that passes over our heads, every local form of vegetation or of soil, we shall receive fresh illustration of his principles, fresh confirmation of his facts. We shall feel, wherever we go, that he has been there before us: whatever we see, that he has seen and seized before us: and we shall at last cease the investigation, with a well-grounded trust, that whatever we have been unable to account for,

[1] [For "that feeling," eds. 1 and 2 read, "it would be unjust if it could, for that feeling," etc.]

[2] [Eds. 1–4 have a further passage thus:—

§ 7. There is nothing in his works which can be enjoyed without knowledge.

§ 8. And nothing which knowledge will not enable us to enjoy.

"years of labour. And there is, indeed, nothing in Turner,—not one dot nor line, whose meaning can be understood without knowledge; because he never aims at sensual impressions, but at the deep final truth, which only meditation can discover, and only experience recognize. There is nothing done or omitted by him which does not imply such a comparison of ends, such rejection of the least worthy (as far as they are incompatible with the rest), such careful selection and arrangement of all that can be united, as can only be enjoyed by minds capable of going through the same process and discovering the reasons for the choice. And, as there is nothing in his works which can be enjoyed without knowledge, so there is nothing in them which knowledge will not enable us to enjoy. There is no test . . ."

These paragraphs are 7 and 8 in eds. 1 and 2; 5 and 6 in eds. 3 and 4.]

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and what we still dislike in his works, has reason for it, and foundation like the rest; and that even where he has failed or erred, there is a beauty in the failure which none are able to equal, and a dignity in the error which none are worthy to reprove.

§ 5. His former rank and progress.

There has been marked and constant progress in his mind; he has not, like some few artists, been without childhood; his course of study has been as evidently, as it has been swiftly, progressive; and in different stages of the struggle, sometimes one order of truth, sometimes another, has been aimed at or omitted. But, from the beginning to the height of his career, he never sacrificed a greater truth to a less. As he advanced, the previous knowledge or attainment was absorbed in what succeeded, or abandoned only if incompatible, and never abandoned without a gain; and his last works presented the sum and perfection of his accumulated knowledge, delivered with the impatience and passion of one who feels too much, and knows too much, and has too little time to say it in, to pause for expression, or ponder over his syllables. There was in them the obscurity, but the truth, of prophecy; the instinctive and burning language which would express less if it uttered more, which is indistinct only by its fulness, and dark with its abundant meaning. He felt now, with long-trained vividness and keenness of sense, too bitterly the impotence of the hand, and the vainness of the colour, to catch one shadow or one image of the glory which God had revealed to him. "I cannot gather the sunbeams out of the east, or I would make *them* tell you what I have seen; but read this, and interpret this, and let us remember together. I cannot gather the gloom out of the night-sky, or I would make that teach you what I have seen; but read this, and interpret this, and let us feel together. And if you have not that within you which I can summon to my aid, if you have not the sun in your spirit, and the passion in your heart, which my words may awaken,

§ 6. Standing of his last works. Their mystery is the consequence of their fulness.

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though they be indistinct and swift, leave me; for I will give you no patient mockery, no laborious insult of that glorious nature, whose I am and whom I serve. Let other servants imitate the voice and the gesture of their master, while they forget his message. Hear that message from me; but remember that the teaching of Divine truth must still be a mystery."

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CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION.—MODERN ART AND MODERN CRITICISM

We have only, in conclusion, to offer a few general remarks respecting modern art and modern criticism.

§ 1. The entire prominence hitherto given to the works of one artist caused only by our not being able to take cognisance of character.

We wish, in the first place, to remove the appearance of invidiousness and partiality which the constant prominence given in the present portion of the work to the productions of one artist, can scarcely fail of bearing in the minds of most readers. When we pass to the examination of what is beautiful and expressive in art, we shall frequently find distinctive qualities in the minds even of inferior artists, which have led them to the pursuit and embodying of particular trains of thought, altogether different from those which direct the compositions of other men, and incapable of comparison with them. Now, when this is the case, we should consider it in the highest degree both invidious and illogical, to say of such different modes of exertion of the intellect, that one is in all points greater or nobler than another. We shall probably find something in the working of all minds which has an end and a power peculiar to itself, and which is deserving of free and full admiration, without any reference whatsoever to what has, in other fields, been accomplished by other modes of thought, and directions of aim. We shall, indeed, find a wider range and grasp in one man than in another; but yet it will be our own fault if we do not discover something in the most limited range of mind which is different from, and in its way better than, anything presented to us by the more grasping intellect. We all know that the nightingale sings more nobly than the lark; but who, therefore, would wish the

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lark not to sing, or would deny that it had a character of its own, which bore a part among the melodies of creation no less essential than that of the more richly gifted bird? And thus we shall find and feel that whatever difference may exist between the intellectual powers of one artist and another, yet wherever there is any true genius, there will be some peculiar lesson which even the humblest will teach us more sweetly and perfectly than those far above them in prouder attributes of mind; and we should be as mistaken as we should be unjust and invidious, if we refused to receive this their peculiar message with gratitude and veneration, merely because it was a sentence and not a volume. But the case is different when we examine their relative fidelity to given facts. That fidelity depends on no peculiar modes of thought or habits of character; it is the result of keen sensibility, combined with high powers of memory and association. These qualities, as such, are the same in all men; character or feeling may direct their choice to this or that object, but the fidelity with which they treat either the one or the other, is dependent on those simple powers of sense and intellect which are like and comparable in all, and of which we can always say that they are greater in this man, or less in that, without reference to the character of the individual. Those feelings which direct Cox to the painting of wild weedy banks and cool melting skies, and those which directed Barret[1] to the painting of glowing foliage and melancholy twilight, are both just and beautiful in their way, and are both worthy of high praise and gratitude, without necessity, nay, without *proper* possibility of comparing one with the other. But the degree of fidelity with which the leaves of the one and the light of the other are rendered, depends upon faculties of sight, sense, and memory common to both, and perfectly comparable; and we may say fearlessly, and without injustice, that one or the other, as the case may be, is more faithful in that

§ 2. The feelings of different artists are incapable of full comparison.

§ 3. But the fidelity and truth of each are capable of real comparison.

[1] [For Cox, see above, p. 46 *n.*; for Barret, p. 275 *n.*]

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which he has chosen to represent. It is also to be remembered that these faculties of sense and memory are not partial in their effect; they will not induce fidelity in the rendering of one class of object, and fail of doing so in another. They act equally, and with equal results, whatever may be the matter subjected to them. The same delicate sense which perceives the utmost grace of the fibres of a tree, will be equally unerring in tracing the character of cloud; and the quick memory which seizes and retains the circumstances of a flying effect of shadow or colour, will be equally effectual in fixing the impression of the instantaneous form of a moving figure or a breaking wave. There are indeed one or two broad distinctions in the nature of the senses, a sensibility to colour, for instance, being very different from a sensibility to form; so that a man may possess one without the other, and an artist may succeed in mere imitation of what is before him, of air, sunlight, etc., without possessing sensibility at all. But wherever we have, in the drawing of any one object, sufficient evidence of real intellectual power, of the sense which perceives the essential qualities of a thing, and the judgment which arranges them so as to illustrate each other, we may be quite certain that the same sense and judgment will operate equally on whatever is subjected to them, and that the artist will be equally great and masterly in his drawing of all that he attempts. Hence we may be quite sure that wherever an artist appears to be truthful in one branch of art, and not in another, the apparent truth is either owing to some trickery of imitation, or is not so great as we suppose it to be. In nine cases out of ten, people who are celebrated for drawing only one thing, and *can* only draw one thing, draw that one thing worse than anybody else. An artist may indeed confine himself to a limited range of subject, but if he be really true in his rendering of this, his power of doing more will be perpetually showing itself in accessaries and minor points. There are few men, for instance, more

§ 4. Especially because they are equally manifested in the treatment of all subjects.

§ 5. No man draws one thing well, if he can draw nothing else.

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limited in subject than Hunt,[1] and yet I do not think there is another man in the Old Water-Colour Society with so keen an eye for truth, or with power so universal. And this is the reason for the exceeding prominence which in the foregoing investigation one or two artists have always assumed over the rest; for the habits of accurate observation and delicate powers of hand which they possess have equal effect, and maintain the same superiority in their works, to whatever class of subject they may be directed. And thus we have been compelled, however unwillingly, to pass hastily by the works of many gifted men, because, however pure their feeling, or original their conceptions, they were wanting in those faculties of the hand and mind which insure perfect fidelity to nature; it will be only hereafter, when we are at liberty to take full cognizance of the thought, however feebly it may be clothed in language, that we shall be able to do real justice to the disciples either of modern or of ancient art.

§ 6. General conclusions to be derived from our past investigation.

But as far as we have gone at present, and with respect only to the *material* truth, which is all that we have been able to investigate, the conclusion to which we must be led is as clear as it is inevitable: that modern artists, as a body, are far more just and full in their views of material things than any landscape painters whose works are extant; but that J. M. W. Turner is the only man who has ever given an entire transcript of the whole system of nature, and is, in this point of view, the only perfect landscape painter whom the world has ever seen.

§ 7. Truth, a standard of all excellence.

Nor are we disposed to recede from our assertion made in Sec. I. Chap. I. § 10,[2] that this material truth is indeed a perfect test of the relative rank of painters, though it does not in itself constitute that rank. We shall be able to prove that truth and beauty, knowledge and imagination, invariably are associated in art;

[1] [See above, p. 603.]
[2] [Sec. i. of Part ii., p. 138.]

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and we shall be able to show that not only in truth to nature, but in all other points, Turner is the greatest landscape painter who has ever lived. But his superiority is, in matters of feeling, one of kind, not of degree. Superiority of degree implies a superseding of others; superiority of kind implies only sustaining a more important, but not more necessary, part than others. If *truth* were all that we required from art, all other painters might cast aside their brushes in despair, for all that they have done he has done more fully and accurately; but when we pass to the higher requirements of art, beauty and character, their contributions are all equally necessary and desirable, because different, and however inferior in position or rank, are still perfect of their kind; their inferiority is only that of the lark to the nightingale, or of the violet to the rose.

§ 8. Modern criticism. Changefulness of public taste.

Such then are the rank and standing of our modern artists. We have had, living with us, and painting for us, the greatest painter of *all* time; a man with whose supremacy of power no intellect of past ages can be put in comparison for a moment. Let us next inquire what is the rank of our critics. Public taste, I believe, as far as it is the encourager and supporter of art, has been the same in all ages; a fitful and vacillating current of vague impression, perpetually liable to change, subject to epidemic desires, and agitated by infectious passion, the slave of fashion, and the fool of fancy; but yet always distinguishing, with singular clearsightedness, between that which is best and that which is worst of the particular class of food which its morbid appetite may call for; never failing to distinguish that which is produced by intellect, from that which is not, though it may be intellect degraded by ministering to its misguided will. Public taste may thus degrade a race of men capable of the highest efforts in art into the portrait painters of ephemeral fashions, but it will yet not fail of discovering who, among these portrait painters, is the man of most mind. It will separate the man who would have

§ 9. Yet associated with a certain degree of Judgment.

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become Buonaroti from the man who would have become Bandinelli,[1] though it will employ both in painting curls, and feathers, and bracelets. Hence, generally speaking, there is no *comparative* injustice done, no false elevation of the fool above the man of mind, provided only that the man of mind will condescend to supply the particular article which the public chooses to want. Of course a thousand modifying circumstances interfere with the action of the general rule; but, taking one case with another, we shall very constantly find the price which the picture commands in the market a pretty fair standard of the artist's rank of intellect. The press, therefore, and all who pretend to lead the public taste, have not so much to direct the multitude whom to go to, as what to ask for. Their business is not to tell us which is our best painter, but to tell us whether we are making our best painter do his best.

§ 10. *Duty of the press.*

Now none are capable of doing this, but those whose principles of judgment are based both on thorough *practical* knowledge of art, and on broad general views of what is true and right, without reference to what has been done at one time or another, or in one school or another. Nothing can be more perilous to the cause of art, than the constant ringing in our painters' ears of the names of great predecessors, as their examples or masters. I would rather hear a great poet, entirely original in his feeling and aim, rebuked or maligned for not being like Wordsworth or Coleridge, than a great painter criticized for not putting us in mind of Claude or Poussin. But such references to former excellence are the only refuge and resource of persons endeavouring to be critics without being artists. They cannot tell you whether a thing is right or not; but they can tell you whether it is like something else or not. And the whole tone of modern criticism, so far as it is worthy of being called criticism, sufficiently shows it to proceed entirely from

§ 11. *Qualifications necessary for discharging it.*

§ 12. *General incapability of modern critics,*

[1] [Bartolommeo Bandinelli, Florentine sculptor (1487–1559), the jealous rival of Michael Angelo Buonaroti; see Vasari's *Lives* (Bohn's ed.), iv. 249.]

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persons altogether unversed in practice, and ignorant of truth, but possessing just enough of feeling to enjoy the solemnity of ancient art; who, not distinguishing that which is really exalted and valuable in the modern school, nor having any just idea of the real ends or capabilities of landscape art, consider nothing right which is not based on the conventional principles of the ancients, and nothing true which has more of nature in it than of Claude. But it is strange that while the noble and unequalled works of modern landscape painters are thus maligned and misunderstood, our historical painters, such as we have, are permitted to pander more fatally every year to the vicious English taste, which can enjoy nothing but what is theatrical, entirely unchastised, nay, encouraged and lauded, by the very men who endeavour to hamper our great landscape painters with rules derived from consecrated blunders. The very critic who has just passed one of the noblest works of Turner,—that is to say, a masterpiece of art to which Time can show no parallel,—with a ribald jest, will yet stand gaping in admiration before the next piece of dramatic glitter and grimace, suggested by the society and adorned with the appurtenances of the green-room,[1] which he finds hung low upon the wall as a brilliant example of the ideal of English art. It is natural enough indeed, that the persons who are disgusted by what is pure and noble, should be delighted with what is vicious and degraded; but

§ 13. *And inconsistency with themselves.*

[1] [Eds. 1 and 2 have here this footnote :—

"We have very great respect for Mr. Maclise's power as a draughtsman, and if we thought that his errors proceeded from weakness, we should not allude to them, but we most devoutly wish that he would let Shakespeare alone. If the Irish ruffian who appeared in 'Hamlet' last year had been gifted with a stout shillelagh, and if his state of prostration had been rationally accounted for by distinct evidence of a recent 'compliment' on the crown; or if the maudlin expression of the young lady christened 'Ophelia' had been properly explained by an empty gin-bottle on her lap, we should have thanked him for his powerful delineation both of character and circumstance. But we cannot permit him thus to mislead the English public (unhappily too easily led by any grinning and glittering fantasy), in all their conceptions of the intention of Shakespeare."

Maclise's "Hamlet," now No. 422 in the National Gallery, was exhibited at the Academy in 1842. For another reference to the picture, see above, p. 82 *n*.]

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it is singular that those who are constantly talking of Claude and Poussin, should never even pretend to a thought of Raffaelle. We could excuse them for not comprehending Turner, if they only would apply the same cut-and-dried criticisms where they might be applied with truth, and productive of benefit; but we endure not the paltry compound of ignorance, false taste, and pretension, which assumes the dignity of classical feeling, that it may be able to abuse whatever is above the level of its understanding, but bursts into rapture with all that is mean or meretricious, if sufficiently adapted to the calibre of its comprehension.

§ 14. How the press may really advance the cause of art.

To notice such criticisms, however, is giving them far more importance than they deserve. They can lead none astray but those whose opinions are absolutely valueless, and we did not begin this chapter with any intent of wasting our time on these small critics, but in the hope of pointing out to the periodical press what kind of criticism is now most required by our school of landscape art; and how it may be in their power, if they will, to regulate its impulses, without checking its energies, and really to advance both the cause of the artist, and the taste of the public.

§ 15. Morbid fondness at the present day for unfinished works;

One of the most morbid symptoms of the general taste of the present day is, a too great fondness for unfinished works. Brilliancy and rapidity of execution are everywhere sought as the highest good, and so that a picture be cleverly handled as far as it is carried, little regard is paid to its imperfection as a whole. Hence some artists are permitted, and others compelled, to confine themselves to a manner of working altogether destructive of their powers, and to tax their energies, not to concentrate the greatest quantity of thought on the least possible space of canvas, but to produce the greatest quantity of glitter and clap-trap in the shortest possible time. To the idler and trickster in art, no system can be more advantageous; but to the man who is really desirous of doing something worth having lived for, to a man of industry, energy, or feeling,

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we believe it to be the cause of the most bitter discouragement. If ever, working upon a favourite subject or a beloved idea, he is induced to tax his powers to the utmost, and to spend as much time upon his picture as he feels necessary for its perfection, he will not be able to get so high a price for the result, perhaps, of a twelvemonth's thought, as he might have obtained for half-a-dozen sketches with a forenoon's work in each, and he is compelled either to fall back upon mechanism, or to starve. Now the press should especially endeavour to convince the public that by this purchase of imperfect pictures they not only prevent all progress and development of high talent, and set tricksters and mechanics on a level with men of mind, but defraud and injure themselves. For there is no doubt whatever, that, estimated merely by the quantity of pleasure it is capable of conveying, a well-finished picture is worth to its possessor half-a-dozen incomplete ones; and that a perfect drawing is, simply as a source of delight, better worth a hundred guineas than a drawing half as finished is worth thirty.* On the other hand, the body of our artists should be kept in mind, that, by indulging the public with rapid and unconsidered work, they are not only depriving themselves of the benefit which each picture ought to

§ 16. *By which the public defraud themselves;*

§ 17. *And in pandering to which, artists ruin themselves.*

* I would further insist on all that is advanced in these paragraphs, with especial reference to the admirable, though strange, pictures of Mr. Millais and Mr. Holman Hunt; and to the principles exemplified in the efforts of other members of a society which unfortunately, or rather unwisely, has given itself the name of "Pre-Raphaelite;" unfortunately, because the principles on which its members are working are neither pre- nor post-Raphaelite, but everlasting. They are endeavouring to paint, with the highest possible degree of completion, what they see in nature, without reference to conventional or established rules; but by no means to imitate the style of any past epoch. Their works are, in finish of drawing, and in splendour of colour, the best in the Royal Academy; and I have great hope that they may become the foundation of a more earnest and able school of art than we have seen for centuries.[1]

[1] [Note first inserted in ed. 5 (1851); *cf.* above, p. 599 *n.* Similarly in his letter to the *Times* (May 30, 1851), Ruskin hoped that the Pre-Raphaelites "may, as they gain experience, lay in our England the foundations of a school of art nobler than the world has seen for three hundred years" (*Arrows of the Chace*, ed. 1890, i. 97).]

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render to them, as a piece of practice and study, but they are destroying the refinement of general taste, and rendering it impossible for themselves ever to find a market for more careful works, supposing that they were inclined to execute them. Nor need any single artist be afraid of setting the example, and producing laboured works, at advanced prices, among the cheap quick drawings of the day. The public will soon find the value of the complete work, and will be more ready to give a large sum for that which is inexhaustible, than a portion of it for that which they are wearied of in a month. The artist who never lets the price command the picture, will soon find the picture command the price.

§ 18. *Necessity of finishing works of art perfectly.*

And it ought to be a rule with every painter, never to let a picture leave his easel while it is yet capable of improvement, or of having more thought put into it. The general effect is often perfect and pleasing, and not to be improved upon, when the details and facts are altogether imperfect and unsatisfactory. It may be difficult, perhaps the most difficult task of art, to complete these details, and not to hurt the general effect; but, until the artist can do this, his art is imperfect and his picture unfinished. That only is a complete picture which has both the general wholeness and effect of nature, and the inexhaustible perfection of nature's details. And it is only in the effort to unite these that a painter really improves. By aiming only at details, he becomes a mechanic; by aiming only at generals, he becomes a trickster; his fall in both cases is sure. Two questions the artist has, therefore, always to ask himself: First, "Is my whole right?" Secondly, "Can my details be added to? Is there a single space in the picture where I can crowd in another thought? Is there a curve in it which I can modulate, a line which I can vary, a vacancy I can fill? Is there a single spot which the eye, by any peering or prying, can fathom or exhaust? If so, my picture is imperfect; and if, in modulating the line or filling the vacancy, I hurt the general effect, my art is imperfect."

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But, on the other hand, though incomplete pictures ought neither to be produced nor purchased, careful and real *sketches* ought to be valued much more highly than they are. Studies of landscape, in chalk or sepia, should form a part of every Exhibition, and a room should be allotted to drawings and designs of figures in the Academy.[1] We should be heartily glad to see the room which is now devoted to bad drawings of incorporeal and imaginary architecture,—of things which never were, and which, thank Heaven! never will be,—occupied, instead, by careful studies for historical pictures; not blots of chiaroscuro, but delicate outlines with the pen or crayon.

§ 19. Sketches *not sufficiently encouraged.*

From young artists nothing ought to be tolerated but simple *bonâ fide imitation* of nature. They have no business to ape the execution of masters; to utter weak and disjointed repetitions of other men's words, and mimic the gestures of the preacher, without understanding his meaning or sharing in his emotions. We do not want their crude ideas of composition, their unformed conceptions of the Beautiful, their unsystematized experiments upon the Sublime. We scorn their velocity; for it is without direction: we reject their decision; for it is without grounds: we contemn their composition; for it is without materials: we reprobate their choice; for it is without comparison. Their duty is neither to choose, nor compose, nor imagine, nor experimentalize; but to be humble and earnest in following the steps of nature, and tracing the finger of God. Nothing is so bad a symptom, in the work of young artists, as too much dexterity of handling; for it is a sign that they are satisfied with their work, and have tried to do nothing more than they were able to do. Their work should be full of failures; for these are the signs of efforts. They should keep to quiet colours, greys and browns; and, making the early works of Turner their example, as his latest are to be their object

§ 20. *Brilliancy of execution or efforts at invention not to be tolerated in young artists.*

§ 21. *The duty and after privileges of all students.*

[1] [On this point, *cf.* the Appendix to Ruskin's *Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House,* 1856.]

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of emulation, should go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth.[1] Then, when their memories are stored, and their imaginations fed, and their hands firm, let them take up the scarlet and the gold, give the reins to their fancy, and show us what their heads are made of. We will follow them wherever they choose to lead; we will check at nothing; they are then our masters, and are fit to be so. They have placed themselves above our criticism, and we will listen to their words in all faith and humility; but not unless they themselves have before bowed, in the same submission, to a higher Authority and Master.

§ 22. Necessity, among our great artists, of more singleness of aim.

Among our greater artists, the chief want, at the present day, is that of *solemnity* and definite purpose. We have too much picture-manufacturing, too much making up of lay figures with a certain quantity of foliage, and a certain quantity of sky, and a certain quantity of water; a little bit of all that is pretty, a little sun and a little shade, a touch of pink and a touch of blue, a little sentiment and a little sublimity, and a little humour and a little antiquarianism, all very neatly associated in a very charming picture, but not working together for a definite end. Or if the aim be higher, as was the case with Barret and

[1] [*Cf.* below, § 23 *n.* This passage—"rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing"—is often quoted apart from its context, as if it were Ruskin's last word on the whole spirit and aims of the landscape-painter. Thus isolated, the passage has been made the foundation of many erroneous criticisms. It is said, for instance, that Ruskin ignored the value of composition, and that his words here are inconsistent with his subsequent praise of Turner's free hand in dealing with the materials of his scenes. It will be seen, however, that Ruskin is here addressing himself to "young artists"; he is inculcating a method of study, a means of mastery, not a philosophy of art. In the preface to his *Pre-Raphaelitism*, he cited the passage (ending at "scorning nothing"), but was again careful to remark that it was addressed "to the young artists of England." In his *Catalogue of the Sketches and Drawings by Turner exhibited at Marlborough House*, 1857–58, Ruskin pointed to the severe discipline which Turner underwent before "giving reins to his fancy." A typical instance of the misunderstanding of Ruskin's meaning in this passage, and a reply at length by one of the present editors, may be found in the *Fortnightly Review* for March and April, 1900.]

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Varley,[1] we are generally put off with stale repetitions of eternal composition; a great tree, and some goats, and a bridge, and a lake, and the Temple at Tivoli, etc. Now we should like[2] to see our artists working out, with all exertion of their concentrated powers, such marked pieces of landscape character as might bear upon them the impression of solemn, earnest, and pervading thought, definitely directed, and aided by every accessary of detail, colour, and idealized form, which the disciplined feeling, accumulated knowledge, and unspared labour of the painter could supply. I have alluded, in the second preface, to the deficiency of our modern artists in these great points of earnestness and completeness;[3] and I revert to it, in conclusion, as their paramount failing, and one fatal in many ways to the interests of art. Our landscapes are all descriptive, not reflective; agreeable and conversational, but not impressive nor didactic. They have no better foundation than

> "That vivacious versatility,
> Which many people take for want of heart.
> They err; 'tis merely what is called mobility,
> A thing of temperament, and *not of art,*
> *Though seeming so from its supposed facility.*
>
> . . . . . .
>
> This makes your actors, *artists,* and romancers,
> Little that's great, but much of what is clever."[4]

Only it is to be observed that, in painters, this vivacity is *not* always versatile. It is to be wished that it were, but it is no such easy matter to be versatile in painting. Shallowness of thought insures not its variety, nor rapidity of production its originality. Whatever may be the case in literature, facility is in art no certain sign of inventive power. The artist who covers most canvas does not always show, even in the sum

[1] [For Barret and Varley, see above, p. 275 *n.*]

[2] [From here to the end of § 22—"Now we should like . . . worst original"—was first given in ed. 2; ed. 1 reads simply:—

> "Now we should like to see our artists working out, with all exertion of their concentrated powers, and application of their most extensive knowledge, such tints of simple and marked individual sentiment as they may get from nature at all places, and at all times."]

[3] [Preface to 2nd ed. § 40, p. 46.]

[4] [*Don Juan,* canto xvi. stanzas 97 and 98. Two lines are omitted in the quotation after "facility," and two more after "romancers."]

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of his works, the largest expenditure of thought.* I have never seen more than four works of John Lewis[1] on the walls of the Water-Colour Exhibition; I have counted forty from other hands; but have found in the end that the forty were a multiplication of one, and the four a concentration of forty. And therefore I would earnestly plead with all our artists, that they would make it a law *never* to repeat themselves; for he who never repeats himself will not produce an inordinate number of pictures, and he who limits himself in number gives himself at least the opportunity of completion. Besides, all repetition is degradation of the art; it reduces it from head-work to handwork; and indicates something like a persuasion on the part of the artist that nature is exhaustible or art perfectible; perhaps, even, by him exhausted and perfected. All copyists are contemptible, but the copyist of himself the most so, for he has the worst original.

Let then every picture[2] be painted with earnest intention

* Of course this assertion does not refer to the differences in mode of execution, which cause one painter to work faster or slower than another, but only to the exertion of mind commonly manifested by the artist, according as he is sparing or prodigal of production.

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[1] [For Lewis, see above, p. 120 *n.*]

[2] [In ed. 1 (only) this paragraph was quite different, being as follows :—

§ 23. What should be their general system.

"Let them take for their subjects some touch of single, unadulterated feeling, out of the simple and serious parts of nature, looking generally for peace and solemnity rather than for action or magnificence, and let each of their subjects so chosen be different from all the others, but yet part of the same system with all the others, having a planned connection with them, as the sonnets of Wordsworth have among themselves; and then let each of these chants or sonnets be worked out with the most laborious completeness, making separate studies of every inch of it, and going to nature for all the important passages, for she will always supply us with what we want a thousand times better than we can ourselves; and let only seven or eight such pictures be painted in the year, instead of the forty or fifty careless repetitions which we see our more prolific water-colour painters produce at present; and there can be little doubt that the public will soon understand the thing, and enjoy it, and be quite as willing to give one hundred guineas for each complete and studied poem as they are now to give twenty for a careless or meaningless sketch. And artists who worked on such a principle would soon find that both their artistical powers, and their fancy, and their imagination, were incalculably strengthened by it, and that they acquired by the pursuit of what was simple, solemn, and individual, the power of becoming, when they chose, truly magnificent and universal."

With this passage, *cf.* above, pref. ed. 2, § 40 *n.*, p. 46.]

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of impressing on the spectator some elevated emotion, and exhibiting to him some one particular, but exalted, beauty. Let a real subject be carefully selected, in itself suggestive of, and replete with, this feeling and beauty; let an effect of light and colour be taken which may harmonize with both; and a sky not invented but recollected: in fact, all so-called invention is in landscape nothing more than appropriate recollection, good in proportion as it is distinct. Then let the details of the foreground be separately studied, especially those plants which appear peculiar to the place; if any one, however unimportant, occurs there, which occurs not elsewhere, it should occupy a prominent position: for the other details, the highest examples of the ideal forms * or characters which he requires are to be selected

§ 23. *What should be their general aim.*

* "Talk of improving nature when it *is* Nature — Nonsense."—*E. V. Rippingille.*[1] I have not yet spoken of the difference, even in what we commonly call Nature, between imperfect and ideal form: the study of this difficult question must, of course, be deferred until we have examined the nature of our impressions of beauty; but it may not be out of place here to hint at the want of care, in many of our artists, to distinguish between the real work of nature and the diseased results of man's interference with her. Many of the works of our greatest artists have for their subjects nothing but hacked and hewn remnants of farm-yard vegetation, branded, root and branch, from their birth, by the prong and the pruning-hook; and the feelings once accustomed to take pleasure in such abortions can scarcely become perceptive of forms truly ideal. I have just said (page 624) that young painters should go to nature trustingly, rejecting nothing, and selecting nothing: so they should; but they must be careful that it *is* nature to whom they go, nature in her liberty, not as servant of all work in the hands of the agriculturist, nor stiffened into court-dress by the landscape-gardener. It must be the pure wild volition and energy of the creation which they follow, not subdued to the furrow, and cicatrized to the pollard, not persuaded into proprieties, nor pampered into diseases. Let them work by the torrent side, and in the forest shadows; not by purling brooks and under "tonsile shades." It is impossible to enter here into discussion of what man can or cannot do by assisting natural operations; it is an intricate question: nor can I, without anticipating what I shall have hereafter to advance, show how or why it happens that the race-horse is *not* the artist's ideal of a horse, nor a prize tulip his ideal of a flower; but so it is. As far as the painter is concerned, man never touches nature but to spoil; he operates on her as a barber would on the Apollo; and if he sometimes increases some particular power or excellence, strength or agility

[1] [Rippingille (1798–1859), painter and writer on art, and conductor of *The Artist and Amateur's Magazine* (1843–4), to which he contributed various papers in accord with the sentiments above given.]

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by the artist from his former studies, or fresh studies made expressly for the purpose, leaving as little as possible—nothing, in fact, beyond their connection and arrangement—to mere imagination. Finally, when his picture is thus perfectly realized in all its parts, let him dash as much of it out as he likes; throw, if he will, mist round it, darkness, or dazzling and confused light, whatever, in fact, impetuous feeling or vigorous imagination may dictate or desire; the forms, once so laboriously realized, will come out, whenever they *do* occur, with a startling and impressive truth which the uncertainty in which they are veiled will enhance rather than diminish; and the imagination, strengthened by discipline and fed with truth, will achieve the utmost of creation that is possible to finite mind.

The artist who thus works will soon find that he cannot repeat himself if he would; and new fields of exertion, new subjects of contemplation, open to him in nature day by day; and that, while others lament the weakness of their invention, *he* has nothing to lament but the shortness of life.

in the animal, tallness, or fruitfulness, or solidity in the tree, he invariably loses that *balance* of good qualities which is the chief sign of perfect specific form; above all, he destroys the appearance of free *volition* and *felicity*, which, as I shall show hereafter, is one of the essential characters of organic beauty. Until, however, I can enter into the discussion of the nature of beauty, the only advice I can safely give the young painter is, to keep clear of clover fields and parks, and to hold to the unpenetrated forest and the unfurrowed hill. There he will find that every influence is noble, even when destructive; that decay itself is beautiful; and that, in the elaborate and lovely composition of all things, if at first sight it seems less studied than the works of men, the appearance of Art is only prevented by the presence of Power.

"Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her: 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."

—Wordsworth [*Tintern Abbey*].

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And now but one word more,[1] respecting the great artist whose works have formed the chief subject of this treatise. The greatest qualities of those works have not yet been so much as touched upon. None but their imitative excellences have been proved, and, therefore, the enthusiasm with which I speak of them must necessarily appear overcharged and absurd. It might, perhaps, have been more prudent to have withheld the full expression of it till I had shown the full grounds for it; but once written, such expression must remain till I have justified it. And, indeed, I think there is enough, even in the foregoing pages, to show that these works are, as far as concerns the ordinary critics of the press, above all animadversion, and above all praise; and that, by the public, they are not to be received as in any way subjects or matters of opinion, but of faith. We are not to approach them to be pleased, but to be taught; not to form a judgment, but to receive a lesson. Our periodical writers, therefore, may save themselves the trouble either of blaming or praising: their duty is not to pronounce opinions upon the work of a man who has walked with nature threescore years; but to impress upon the public the respect with which they are to be received, and to make request to him, on the part of the people of England, that he would now touch no unimportant work, that he would not spend time on slight or small pictures, but give to the nation a series of grand, consistent, systematic, and completed poems.[2] We desire that he should follow out his own thoughts and intents of heart, without reference to any human authority.

§ 24. *Duty of the press with respect to the works of Turner.*

[1] ["And now but one word . . . but of faith," ed. 1 (only) for this passage reads briefly:—

"With respect to the great artist whose works have formed the chief subject of this treatise, the duty of the press is clear. He is above all criticism, beyond all animadversion, and beyond all praise. His works are not to be received as in any way subjects or matters of opinion; but of Faith."]

[2] [Ed. 1 (only) adds:—

"poems, using no means nor vehicle capable of any kind of change. We do not presume to form even so much as a wish, or an idea, respecting the manner or matter of anything proceeding from his hand. We desire only that he would follow . . ."]

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But we request, in all humility, that those thoughts may be seriously and loftily given; and that the whole power of his unequalled intellect may be exerted in the production of such works as may remain for ever, for the teaching of the nations. In all that he says, we believe; in all that he does, we trust.* It is therefore that we pray him to utter nothing lightly; to do nothing regardlessly. He stands upon an eminence, from which he looks back over the universe of God and forward over the generations of men. Let every work of his hand be

* It has been hinted, in some of the reviews of the second volume of this work, that the writer's respect for Turner has diminished since the above passage was written. He would, indeed, have been deserving of little attention, if, with the boldness manifested in the preceding pages, he had advanced opinions based on so infirm foundation as that the course of three years could effect modification in them. He was justified by the sudden accession of power which the works of the great artist exhibited at the period when this volume was first published, as well as by the low standard of the criticism to which they were subjected, in claiming, with respect to his then works, a submission of judgment greater indeed than may generally be accorded to even the highest human intellect, yet not greater than such a master might legitimately claim from such critics; and the cause of the peculiar form of advocacy into which the preceding chapters necessarily fell has been already stated more than once. In the following sections it became necessary, as they treated a subject of intricate relations and peculiar difficulty, to obtain a more general view of the scope and operation of art, and to avoid all conclusions in any wise referable to the study of particular painters. The reader will therefore find, not that lower rank is attributed to Turner, but that he is henceforward compared with the greatest men, and occupies his true position among the most noble of all time.[1]

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[1] [Note first introduced in ed. 3. The occasion of the note is explained in the following extract from a letter by Ruskin to W. H. Harrison, written at Vevay, August 12, 1846 :—

> "I answered the *Athenæum* when it wrote politely; its rascality and rudeness put it under the mark of answer now. Still, as it and some others hint that my views of Turner have changed, I should be glad, if there be time, to add the note on the next page, at the end of the first volume—putting it in the form of a note to the sentence 'in all that he says we believe, in all that he does we trust.' I think this would be well at any rate, as many readers might fancy the same thing. I shall come back to Turner in the third volume."

The MS. of the note (preserved among Harrison's papers) shows a few variations from the printed text; as, *e.g.* "*shallow* foundation" for "*infirm.*" The reference is to a very abusive review of the second volume of *Modern Painters* in the *Athenæum* for July 25, 1846 (No. 978, pp. 765–767), in the course of which the writer said, "He begins his book with a contrite avowal of over-hastiness, and he ends it with a recantation of his former creed about Mr. Turner's infallible paintership."]

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a history of the one, and a lesson to the other. Let each exertion of his mighty mind be both hymn and prophecy; adoration to the Deity, revelation to mankind.[1]

POSTSCRIPT[2]

THE above passage was written in the year 1848; too late. It is true, that, soon after the publication of this work, the abuse of the press, which had been directed against Turner with unceasing virulence during the production of his noblest works, sank into timid animadversion, or changed into unintelligent praise; but not before illness, and, in some degree, mortification, had enfeebled the hand and chilled the heart of the painter.[3]

This year (1851) he has no picture on the walls of the Academy; and the *Times* of May 3rd says, "We miss those works of INSPIRATION!"

We miss! Who misses? The populace of England rolls by to weary itself in the great bazaar of Kensington, little thinking that a day will come when those veiled vestals and prancing amazons, and goodly merchandize of precious stones and gold, will all be forgotten as though they had not been, but that the light which has faded from the walls of the Academy is one which a million of Koh-i-Noors could not rekindle, and that the year 1851 will, in the far future, be remembered less for what it has displayed than for what it has withdrawn.

DENMARK HILL,
June, 1851.

[1] [*Cf.* the praise of Turner in the Letter to a College Friend of Dec. 3, 1840, Vol. I. p. 429.]

[2] [The Postscript was added in ed. 5 (1851). With it *cf.* the concluding passage in Ruskin's reply to *The Weekly Chronicle*, Appendix ii. p. 645.]

[3] [See above, Introduction, p. xlii.]

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APPENDIX

I. A REPLY TO "BLACKWOOD'S" CRITICISM OF TURNER (1836)

II. REPLIES TO PRESS CRITICISMS OF "MODERN PAINTERS," VOL. I.

1. A LETTER TO "THE WEEKLY CHRONICLE" (SEPT. 23, 1843)
2. ART CRITICISM. A LETTER TO "THE ARTIST AND AMATEUR'S MAGAZINE" (JAN. 1844)
3. REFLECTIONS IN WATER. A LETTER TO "THE ARTIST AND AMATEUR'S MAGAZINE" (FEB. 1844)

III. LETTERS ON "MODERN PAINTERS," VOL. I.

1. TO SAMUEL PROUT (FEB. 21, 1844)
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4. TO THE SAME (OCT. 15, 1844)
5. TO THE SAME (A LITTLE LATER)

IV. PREFACES TO SELECTIONS FROM "MODERN PAINTERS"

1. "FRONDES AGRESTES" (1875)
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V. THE MSS. OF "MODERN PAINTERS," VOL. I.

VI. MINOR "VARIÆ LECTIONES"

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I

A REPLY TO "BLACKWOOD'S" CRITICISM OF TURNER[1]

(1836)

1. THOSE who have long bowed themselves in reverence and admiration to the imperial passing-on of the maiden meditation of their much loved Maga,[2]—who have fed upon her thoughts of beauty, and listened to her words of wisdom,—must indeed be grieved to meet with the most exquisite combination of ignorance and bad taste which she has just presented to them, in the shape of a criticism on the works of J. M. W. Turner, R.A.

It usually happens, that people most admire what they least understand. In the case of this artist the rule is reversed; he is admired, because understood, only by a few.

2. What sort of a critic he may be, to whom Maga has presented the magic ring of her authority, appears to me very difficult to determine. He must have a mind fastidiously high bred, indeed, who complains of vulgarity in Murillo.[3]

[1] [This paper (the origin of which is described in the Introduction, above, p. xviii.) has not hitherto been published. It is here printed from a copy, in a female hand, found among Ruskin's MSS. at Brantwood, MS. Book vii. (see Vol. II. p. 532). Some account of it, with one extract (the greater portion of § 5), was given in W. G. Collingwood's *Life of Ruskin*, 1900, pp. 46–48. The paragraphs are here numbered for convenience of reference.

In the number of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* for October 1836 (vol. xl. No. 252) there was an article on "The Exhibitions." The first portion of it dealt with the annual Exhibition of Old Masters then held by the British Institution (pp. 543–549); the latter portion, with the summer exhibition of the "Somerset House" (*i.e.* Royal Academy's) Exhibition, pp. 549–556. Notices of Turner's pictures occupied pp. 550–551.]

[2] [This familiar term for *Blackwood* was simply a contraction of Maga-zine.]

[3] [In a note on "The Assumption of the Virgin," by Murillo, the reviewer had said: "There are no less than nine pictures by Murillo in this Gallery, of large size, and high pretensions, and, to speak as a merchant, we presume them to be estimated at great value. Now and then we see a Madonna and Child by Murillo (as in the Dulwich Gallery), which justifies a high reputation, but how seldom are we entirely satisfied with his works! His taste was too much steeped in vulgarity, so that he rarely exhibited any grace or dignity. In his Holy Families even, his vulgarity is too often conspicuous. The study of beggar-boys seems to have been ever uppermost in his mind." A few years later Ruskin was to adopt as his own the opinion of Murillo which he here denounces; see the letter to Liddell, below, p. 670. For other references to Murillo, in very much the same sense, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. pt. iii. sec. i. ch. x. § 3, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. iv. § 4, and *Two Paths*, § 57 *n.*]

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He appears never to have seen any of this artist's more elevated pieces. It is true that his virgins are never such Goddess-mothers as those of Correggio or Raphael, but they are never vulgar: they are mortal, but into their mortal features is cast such a light of holy loveliness, such a beauty of sweet soul, such an unfathomable love, as renders them occasionally no unworthy rivals of the imaginations of the higher masters. He has observed with truth that the pictures in the British Institution are not favourable specimens of the master;[1] I even doubt if the "Angels coming to Abraham" be from his hand: but he does not seem aware that the "Holy Family" in the Dulwich Gallery[2] is as much inferior to some of his higher efforts, as it is superior to the paintings in the British Institution.

3. With regard to his remarks on Turner, I will take them in order:[3]—

If he had expressed himself grammatically, I believe he would have affirmed that the "Venice of Juliet and her Nurse" was a composition from models of

[1] [The nine Murillos exhibited were "The Assumption of the Virgin" (Lord Ashburton); "St. Francis with the Infant Saviour" (Lord Cowley); "The Angels coming to Abraham" and "The Return of the Prodigal" (Duke of Sutherland); "San Juliana," "St. Joseph leading the Infant Saviour, who carries a basket with carpenter's tools," "Santa Rosa—espousing the Infant Saviour," "Virgin of the Assumption," and "Portrait of Don Andres de Andrade and his favourite dog" (J. M. Brackenbury, Esq.). In "The Angels coming to Abraham" the critic had complained of its grey tone, adding, "With regard to the angels, we should certainly wish their 'visits to be few and far between.' But for some angelic indications, we should have thought the apparent unwillingness of Abraham to receive them quite justified, and should such suspicious-looking characters darken the door of any respectable citizen of Cheapside, there is little doubt that he would look out for the policeman."]

[2] [La Madonna del Rosario, No. 281 (formerly 347).

[3] [Turner's pictures at the Academy in 1836 were No. 73, "Juliet and her Nurse" (now in the possession of Colonel O. H. Paine, of New York), No. 144, "Rome from Mount Aventine" (now Lord Rosebery's), and No. 202, "Mercury and Argus" (now Lord Strathcona's). *Blackwood's* criticisms were as follows: "'Juliet and her Nurse.' —That is indeed a strange jumble—'confusion worse confounded.' It is neither sunlight, moonlight, nor starlight, nor firelight, though there is an attempt at a display of fireworks in one corner, and we conjecture that these are meant to be stars in the heavens—if so, it is a versification of Hamlet's extravagant madness—

'Doubt that the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt Truth to be a liar;'

but with such a Juliet you would certainly doubt 'I love.' Amidst so many absurdities, we scarcely stop to ask why Juliet and her nurse should be at Venice. For the scene is a composition as from models of different parts of Venice, thrown higgledy-piggledy together, streaked blue and pink, and thrown into a flour tub. Poor Juliet has been steeped in treacle to make her look sweet, and we feel apprehensive lest the mealy architecture should stick to her petticoat, and flour it."

Of "Rome from Mount Aventine," the critic said that it was "a most unpleasant mixture, wherein white gamboge and raw sienna are, with childish execution, daubed together."

"But," he added, "we think the 'Hanging Committee' should be *suspended* from their office for admitting his 'Mercury and Argus, No. 102.' It is perfectly childish. All blood and chalk. There was not the least occasion for a Mercury to put out Argus's eyes; the horrid glare would have made him shut the whole hundred, and have made Mercury stone blind. Turner reminds us of the man who sold his shadow, and that he might not appear singular, will not let anything in the world have a shadow to show

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different parts of the city, thrown, as he elegantly expresses it, "higgledy-piggledy together." Now, it is no such thing; it is a view taken from the roofs of the houses at the S.W. angle of St. Mark's place, having the lagoon on the right, and the column and church of St. Mark in front. The view is accurate in every particular, even to the number of divisions in the Gothic[1] of the Doge's palace. It would, I think, be as well if your critic would take something more certain than his own vague ideas to bear witness to a fact which tends to the depreciation of a picture, and which was to be asserted by Maga.

He next proceeds to inform us that Turner is out of nature. Perhaps, since he has made this most singular discovery, he may have an idea that "there's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark, but he's an arrant knave." He may even have supposed that there never actually existed such a thing as Ariel; may have suspected that Oberon and Titania never walked the turf of Athenian forests; nay, the far more singular idea may have entered his pericranium, that the super-imposition of an ass's head on his own shoulders would be "out of nature." Turner may be mad: I daresay he is, inasmuch as highest genius is allied to madness; but not so stark mad as to profess to paint nature. He paints *from* nature, and pretty far from it, too; and he would be sadly disappointed who looked in his pictures for a possible scene. Are we to quarrel with him for this? If we are, let us at once condemn to oblivion the finest works of the imagination of our poets: "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel" must be vile,—"Prometheus Unbound," absurd,—much of Shakespeare detestable,—Milton ridiculous,—Spenser childish. Alas! the spirit of all poetry must come under the animadversions of this sweeping rule.

4. Your critic finds much fault with Turner's colour. I think he himself has a rather singular idea of colour when he remarks of a yellow petticoat, that it looks as if it had been dipped in treacle. I suppose, however, this is for the sake of the paltry pun which follows. He goes on to remark that his execution is "childish." Of all artists, Turner is perhaps the least deserving of such blame; he can produce instantaneous effect by a roll of his brush, and, with a few dashes of mingled colour, will express the most complicated subject: the means employed appear more astonishingly inadequate to the effect produced than in any other master. No one can deny that the faults of Turner are numerous, and perhaps more egregious than those of any other great existing artist; but if he has greater faults, he has also greater beauties.

5. The critic affirms that he has deprived the sun of his birthright to cast shadows. Now the manner in which Turner makes his visible sunbeams walk over his foregrounds towards the spectator, is one of his most peculiar beauties;

for love or money. . . . He has robbed the sun of his birthright to cast shadows. Whenever Nature shall dispense with them too, and shall make trees like brooms, and this green earth to alternate between brimstone and white, set off with brightest blues that no longer shall keep their distance; when cows shall be made of white paper, and milk-white figures represent pastoral, and when human eyes shall be happily gifted with a kaleidoscopic power to patternize all confusion, and shall become ophthalmia proof, then will Turner be a greater painter than ever the world yet saw, or than ever the world, constituted as it is at present, wishes to see. It is grievous to see genius, that it might outstrip all others, fly off into mere eccentricities, where it ought to stand alone, because none to follow it."]

[1] [By "the Gothic" is here meant (as in *Poems*, Vol. II. p. 402) "the structure and mouldings of arch" (see *Præterita*, ii. ch. vi. § 114).]

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and in this very picture of "Mercury and Argus" it is inimitably fine,—and is produced by the exquisite perspective of his shadows, and the singular lurid tints of his reflected lights.

The connoisseur remarks, a few pages further on, that "*even* composition is *often* made out by light, shade, and colour."[1] Will he inform us what else it could be made out by? Form does a little; but nothing compared to light, shade, and colour; and this he proceeds to assure us the graver cannot give. A good engraver can express any variety of colour, for there is as much light and shade in pure colour as in neutral tints; and it is this power of giving light and shade by pure colour in which Turner so peculiarly excels, and by which his pictures become so wonderfully adapted for engraving;[2] (for I presume that even this Zoïlus[3] of Turner will not venture to deny that engravings from Turner are [not[4]] inimitably fine, and unapproachable by those from the paintings of any other artist;) and this peculiarity in his manner is remarkably observable in "Mercury and Argus," for though the shadows of the complicated foreground are beautifully true, they are all expressed by colour. That this is contrary to nature, and to the rules of Art, I do not deny; and therefore it is a great pity that the admiration of the genius of Turner, which is almost universal among artists, raises up so many imitators. He is a meteor, dashing on in a path of glory which all may admire, but in which none can follow: and his imitators must be, and always have been, moths fluttering about the lights, into which if they enter they are destroyed.[5]

5. His imagination is Shakespearian in its mightiness. Had the scene of "Juliet and her Nurse" risen up before the mind of a poet, and been described in "words that burn,"[6] it had been the admiration of the world: but, placed before us on the canvass, it becomes—what critics of the brush and pallet may show their wit upon at the expence of their judgement; and what real artists and men of feeling and taste *must* admire, but dare not attempt to imitate. Many-coloured mists are floating above the distant city, but such mists as you might imagine to be aetherial spirits, souls of the mighty dead breathed out of the tombs of Italy into the blue of her bright heaven, and wandering in vague and infinite glory around the earth that they have loved. Instinct with

[1] [In praising Danby's "Opening of the Sixth Seal," the reviewer said (p. 554): "The print gives not the composition, for even composition is often made out by light and shade and colour, which, where the tones are so varied, the graver will fail to give."]

[2] [Ruskin's first knowledge of Turner was derived from engravings, and especially from the vignettes in Rogers' *Italy* (see *Præterita*, i. ch. i. § 28). To these he often refers in his *juvenilia*: see Vol. I. pp. 233, 243. For Turner and the engravers, see above, p. 299 *n.*]

[3] [Zoïlus, the critical Thersites of antiquity, was known as the chastiser even of Homer ("Homeromastix"). He also flew at Plato, Isocrates, and other great writers:—

"Ingenium magni livor detrectat Homeri:
Quisquis es, ex illo, Zoile, nomen habes."
—Ovid. *Rem. Am.* 366.]

[4] [The MS. has "not," which, however, is clearly a mistake.]

[5] [Cf. *The Poetry of Architecture*, § 4, in Vol. I. p. 6.]

[6] ["Bright-eyed Fancy, hovering o'er,
Scatters from her pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."
—Gray: *Progress of Poesy*.]

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

J. M. W. Turner, R.A. — [illegible]

Mercury and Argus.

From the Picture in possession of Lord Strathcona & Mount Royal.

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the beauty of uncertain light, they move and mingle among the pale stars, and rise up into the brightness of the illimitable heaven, whose soft, sad blue eye gazes down into the deep waters of the sea for ever,—that sea whose motionless and silent transparency is beaming with phosphor light,[1] that emanates out of its sapphire serenity like bright dreams breathed into the spirit of a deep sleep. And the spires of the glorious city rise indistinctly bright into those living mists, like pyramids of pale fire from some vast altar; and amidst the glory of the dream, there is as it were the voice of a multitude entering by the eye,—arising from the stillness of the city like the summer wind passing over the leaves of the forest, when a murmur is heard amidst their multitude.

This, oh Maga, is the picture which your critic has pronounced to be like "models of different parts of Venice, streaked blue and white, and thrown into a flour-tub"! That this picture is not seen by either starlight, sunlight, moonlight, or firelight, is perfectly true: it is a light of his own, which no other artist can produce,—a light which seems owing to some phosphorescent property in the air. The picture can be, and ought only to be viewed as embodied enchantment, delineated magic.[2]

6. With regard to this connoisseur's remarks on our present school of painting, I perfectly agree with him.[3] The meretricious glare of Somerset House, or of any of our modern exhibitions, is strikingly faulty and disagreeable: but Turner is an exception to all rules, and can be judged by no standard of art. In a wildly magnificent enthusiasm, he rushes through the aetherial dominions of the world of his own mind,—a place inhabited by the *spirits* of *things*; he has filled his mind with materials drawn from the close study of nature (no artist has studied nature more intently)—and then changes and combines, giving effects without absolute causes, or, to speak more accurately, seizing the soul and essence of beauty, without regarding the means by which it is effected.

7. It appears to me that your critic intends to refer to something of this sort when he says (what he meant to say I cannot tell, for he has left it to his readers to express, as well as to answer, his objections)—he says that "genius ought to stand alone, because none to follow it." Now if I do him the favour to put this into English for him, it will be, I suppose, "because none are capable of following it." Why should they not be capable of following it? He might as well tell us that a man walked alone, *because* nobody else walked with him. Have not all persons the same fingers and muscles,—brushes, canvass, and colours? Genius cannot show itself by mere handling;—

[1] [A favourite expression of Ruskin in his *juvenilia*: see Vol. II. p. 94 *n.*]

[2] [It is interesting to note that the enthusiasm of the young Ruskin for these pictures was shared by Constable. "Turner has outdone himself," he wrote of the exhibition of 1836, "he seems to paint with tinted steam, so evanescent and so airy" (Leslie's *Life of Constable*, p. 277).]

[3] [In concluding his article on the exhibitions, the critic expressed the opinion (pp. 554–555) that the arts had retrograded in this country. "Our best painters," he said, "were before the Academy. . . . We fear it is in the nature of Academies and their Exhibitions to multiply artists, but not to promote genius. Every exhibitor must strive to attract, and this endeavour leads him beyond 'the modesty of nature.' . . . The practice, by-the-bye, of touching and retouching, on the walls, before the public are admitted, should on no account be allowed; for how can pictures painted in one light and retouched under another, and with all meretricious glare about them, be expected to look well when removed to the quietness of a private gallery?"]

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it is by the difference in their powers and prejudices that minds are distinguished. All genius is mannered, and frequently excentric; and it is not the effort of a little mind to be singular, but the doings of a mighty mind, which we perceive in the works of Turner. All minds move in a peculiar channel, and think and feel in a peculiar manner. Turner thinks and feels in colour; he cannot help doing so. Nature has given him a peculiar eye, and a wildly beautiful imagination, and he must obey its dictates; and the astronomer, who observes the erratic course of a comet with astonishment and admiration, would be as reasonable in supposing that he could direct its course, as are the petty connoisseurs, who imagine themselves capable of comprehending, guiding, and dictating to the electric genius of Turner.

8. At the present day, contumely, and scorn, and animadversion are heaped on the devoted head of this artist by the short-handed reporters of newspapers, and short-sighted critics of magazines. Innumerable dogs are baying the moon:—do they think she will bate of her brightness, or aberrate from the majesty of her path?

There is no danger that either the fame or the feelings of Turner should be hurt by such "criticism": but there *is* danger—imminent danger—of injury to the reputation of his critics. This is of no consequence where those critics are but the writers of a day,—persons whose reputation is of as little consequence as their opinion. But when Maga takes up the pen of criticism she should remember that the injury of her honour is proportionate to the value of her words, and the weight of her authority: and that authority should be delegated to persons who can judge accurately, feel deeply, and write correctly; not to critics of so fastidious a disposition as to discover vulgarity in the mind of Murillo, and childishness in the pencil of Turner.

October 1st, 1836.

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II

REPLIES TO CRITICISMS OF "MODERN PAINTERS," VOL. I.

1. "MODERN PAINTERS": A REPLY[1]

To the Editor of "The Weekly Chronicle."

SIR,—I was much gratified by reading in your columns of the 15th[2] instant a piece of close, candid, and artistical criticism on my work entitled *Modern Painters*. Serious and well-based criticism is at the present day so rare, and our periodicals are filled so universally with the splenetic jargon or meaningless praise of ignorance, that it is no small pleasure to an author to meet either with praise which he can view with patience, or censure which he can regard with respect. I seldom, therefore, read, and have never for an instant thought of noticing, the ordinary animadversions of the press; but the critique on *Modern Painters* in your pages is evidently the work of a man both of knowledge and feeling; and is at once so candid and so keen, so honest and so subtle, that I am desirous of offering a few remarks on the points on which it principally touches—they are of importance to art; and I feel convinced that the writer is desirous only of elucidating truth, not of upholding a favourite error. With respect first to Gaspar's painting of the "Sacrifice of Isaac." It is not on the faith of any *single* shadow that I have pronounced the time intended to be near noon[3]—though the shadow of the two figures being very short, and cast *from* the spectator, is in itself conclusive. The whole system of chiaroscuro of the picture is lateral; and the light is expressly shown not to come from the distance by its breaking brightly on the bit of rock and waterfall on the left, from which the high copse wood altogether intercepts the rays proceeding from the horizon. There are multitudes of pictures by Gaspar with this same effect—leaving no doubt whatever on my mind that they are all manufactured by the same approved recipe, probably given him by Nicholas, but worked out by Gaspar with the clumsiness and vulgarity which are invariably attendant on the efforts of an inferior mind to realise the ideas of a greater. The Italian masters universally make the horizon the chief light of their picture, whether the effect intended be of noon or evening. Gaspar, to save himself the trouble of graduation,

[1] [From *The Weekly Chronicle*, September 23, 1843. Reprinted in *Arrows of the Chace*, 1880, vol. i. pp. 3–13.]

[2] [It should be 16th, the criticism having appeared in the preceding weekly issue. For an extract from the criticism, see above, Introduction, p. xxxv.]

[3] [See above, p. 283.]

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washes his sky half blue and half yellow, and separates the two colours by a line of cloud. In order to get his light conspicuous and clear, he washes the rest of his sky of a dark deep blue, without any thoughts about time of day or elevation of sun, or any such minutiæ; finally, having frequently found the convenience of a black foreground, with a bit of light coming in round the corner, and probably having no conception of the possibility of painting a foreground on any other principle, he naturally falls into the usual method —blackens it all over, touches in a few rays of lateral light, and turns out a very respectable article; for in such language only should we express the completion of a picture painted throughout on conventional principles, without one reference to nature, and without one idea of the painter's own. With respect to Salvator's "Mercury and the Woodman,"[1] your critic has not allowed for the effect of time on its blues. They are now, indeed, sobered and brought down, as is every other colour in the picture, until it is scarcely possible to distinguish any of the details in its darker parts; but they *have been* pure and clean, and the mountain is absolutely the same colour as the open part of the sky. When I say it is "in full light," I do not mean that it is the highest light of the picture, (for no distant mountain *can* be so, when compared with bright earth or white clouds,) but that no accidental shadow is cast upon it; that it is under open sky, and so illumined that there must necessarily be a difference in hue between its light and dark sides, at which Salvator has not even hinted.

Again, with respect to the question of focal distances,[2] your critic, in common with many very clever people to whom I have spoken on the subject, has confused the obscurity of objects which are *laterally* out of the focal *range*, with that of objects which are *directly* out of the focal *distance*. If all objects in a landscape were in the same plane, they should be represented on the plane of the canvas with equal distinctness, because the eye has no greater lateral range on the canvas than in the landscape, and can only command a point in each. But this point in the landscape may present an intersection of lines belonging to different distances,—as when a branch of a tree, or tuft of grass, cuts against the horizon: and yet these different distances cannot be discerned together: we lose one if we look at the other, so that no painful intersection of lines is ever felt. But on the canvass, as the lines of foreground and of distance are on the *same* plane, they *will* be seen together whenever they intersect, painfully and distinctly; and, therefore, unless we make one series, whether near or distant, obscure and indefinite, we shall always represent as visible at once that which the eye can only perceive by two separate acts of seeing. Hold up your finger before this page, six inches from it. If you look at the edge of your finger, you cannot see the letters; if you look at the letters, you cannot see the edge of your finger, but as a confused, double, misty line. Hence in painting, you must either take for your subject the finger or the letters; you cannot paint both

[1] [See above, p. 281. The critic of the *Chronicle* had written that the rocky mountains in this picture "are *not* sky-blue, neither are they near enough for detail of crag to be seen, neither are they in full light, but are quite as indistinct as they would be in nature, and just the colour."]

[2] [See above, p. 322. "Turner introduced a new era in landscape art, . . . intended to repose." To that passage the critic of the *Chronicle* had objected, attempting to show that it would result in Nature being "represented with just half the quantity of light and colour that she possesses."]

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distinctly without violation of truth. It is of no consequence how quick the change of the eye may be; it is not one whit quicker than its change from one part of the horizon to another, nor are the two intersecting distances more visible at the same time than two opposite portions of a landscape to which it passes in succession. Whenever, therefore, in a landscape, we look from the foreground to the distance, the foreground is subjected to *two* degrees of indistinctness: the first, that of an object *laterally* out of the focus of the eye; and the *second*, that of an object *directly* out of the focus of the eye; being too near to be seen with the focus adapted to the distance. In the picture, when we look from the foreground to the distance, the foreground is subjected only to *one* degree of indistinctness, that of being out of the lateral range; for as both the painting of the distance and of the foreground are on the same plane, they are seen together with the same focus. Hence we must supply the *second* degree of indistinctness by slurring with the brush, or we shall have a severe and painful intersection of near and distant lines, impossible in nature. Finally, a very false principle is implied by part of what is advanced by your critic—which has led to infinite error in art, and should therefore be instantly combated whenever it were hinted—that the ideal is different from the true. It is, on the contrary, only the perfection of truth. The Apollo is not a *false* representation of man, but the most perfect representation of all that is constant and essential in man,—free from the accidents and evils which corrupt the truth of his nature.[1] Supposing we are describing to a naturalist some animal he does not know, and we tell him we saw one with a hump on its back, and another with strange bends in its legs, and another with a long tail, and another with no tail, he will ask us directly, but what is its *true* form, what is its *real* form? This truth, this reality, which he requires of us, is the *ideal* form, that which is hinted at by all the individuals,—aimed at, but not arrived at. But never let it be said that, when a painter is defying the principles of nature at every roll of his brush, as I have shown that Gaspar does, when, instead of working out the essential characters of specific form, and raising those to their highest degree of nobility and beauty, he is casting all character aside, and carrying out imperfection and accident; never let it be said, in excuse for such degradation of nature, that it is done in pursuit of the ideal. As well might this be said in defence of the promising sketch of the human form pasted on the wainscoat behind the hope of the family—artist and musician of equal power—in the "Blind Fiddler."[2] Ideal beauty is the generalization of consummate knowledge, the concentration of perfect truth, —not the abortive vision of ignorance in its study. Nor was there ever yet one conception of the human mind beautiful, but as it was based on truth.

[1] [The passage in the *Chronicle* ran thus: "The Apollo is but an ideal of the human form; no figure ever moulded of flesh and blood was like it." With the objection to this criticism we may compare the passage above, p. 111, where the ideal is defined as "the utmost degree of beauty of which the species is capable." See also *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xiii. § 2;—"The perfect *idea* of the form and condition in which all the properties of the species are fully developed is called the Ideal of the species;" and "That unfortunate distinctness between Idealism and Realism which leads most people to imagine that the Ideal is opposed to the Real, and therefore false."]

[2] [This picture of Sir David Wilkie's was presented to the National Gallery (No. 99) by Sir George Beaumont, in 1826. For other references to Wilkie, see p. 82 *n.*]

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Whenever we leave nature, we fall immeasurably beneath her. So, again, I find fault with the "ropy wreath" of Gaspar,[1] not because he chose massy cloud instead of light cloud; but because he has drawn his massy cloud *falsely*, making it look tough and powerless, like a chain of Bologna sausages, instead of gifting it with the frangible and elastic vastness of nature's mountain vapour.

Finally, Sir, why must it be only "when he is gone from us"[2] that the power of our greatest English landscape painter is to be acknowledged? It cannot, indeed, be fully understood until the current of years has swept away the minor lights which stand around it, and left it burning alone; but at least the scoff and the sneer might be lashed into silence, if those only did their duty by whom it is already perceived. And let us not think that our unworthiness has no effect on the work of the master. I could be patient if I thought that *no* effect was wrought on his noble mind by the cry of the populace; but, scorn it as he may, and does, it is yet impossible for any human mind to hold on its course, with the same energy and life, through the oppression of a perpetual hissing, as when it is cheered on by the quick sympathy of its fellow-men.[3] It is not in art as in matters of political duty, where the path is clear and the end visible. The springs of feeling may be oppressed or sealed by the want of an answer in other bosoms, though the sense of principle cannot be blunted except by the individual's *own* error; and though the knowledge of what is right, and the love of what is beautiful, may still support our great painter through the languor of age—and Heaven grant it may for years to come—yet we cannot hope that he will ever cast his spirit upon the canvass with the same freedom and fire as if he felt that the voice of its inspiration was waited for among men, and dwelt upon with devotion. Once, in ruder times, the work of a great painter * was waited for through days at his door, and attended to its place of deposition by the enthusiasm of a hundred cities; and painting rose from that time, a rainbow upon the Seven Hills, and on the cypressed heights of Fiésole, guiding them and lighting them for ever, even in the stillness of their decay. How can we hope that England will ever win for herself such a crown,

* Cimabue. The quarter of the town is yet named, from the rejoicing of that day, Borgo Allegri.[4]

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[1] [The bank of cloud in the "Sacrifice of Isaac" is spoken of above, p. 375, as "a ropy, tough-looking wreath." On this the reviewer commented.]

[2] ["We agree" (wrote the *Chronicle*) "with the writer in almost every word he says about this great artist; and we have no doubt that, when he is gone from among us, his memory will receive the honour due to his living genius." *Cf.* with this passage the postscript (above, p. 631), written in June 1851.]

[3] [Cf. *A Joy for Ever*, § 26.]

[4] [The picture thus honoured was that of the Virgin, painted for the Church of Santa Maria Novella, where it now hangs in the Rucellai Chapel. "This work was an object of so much admiration to the people, . . . that it was carried in solemn procession, with the sound of trumpets and other festal demonstrations, from the house of Cimabue to the church, he himself being highly rewarded and honoured for it. It is further reported, and may be read in certain records of old painters, that whilst Cimabue was painting this picture in a garden near the gate of San Pietro, King Charles the Elder, of Anjou, passed through Florence, and the authorities of the city, among other marks of respect, conducted him to see the picture of Cimabue. When this work was shown to the king, it had not before been seen by any one; wherefore all the men and women of Florence hastened in great crowds to admire it, making all

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while the works of her highest intellects are set for the pointing of the finger and the sarcasm of the tongue, and the sole reward for the deep, earnest, holy labour of a devoted life, is the weight of stone upon the trampled grave, where the vain and idle crowd will come to wonder how the brushes are mimicked in the marble above the dust of him who wielded them in vain?

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR OF "MODERN PAINTERS."

2. ART CRITICISM[1]

[*To the Editor of "The Artist and Amateur's Magazine."*]

SIR,—Anticipating, with much interest, your reply to the candid and earnest inquiries of your unknown correspondent, Matilda Y.,[2] I am led to hope that you will allow me to have some share with you in the pleasant task of confirming an honest mind in the truth. Subject always to your animadversion and correction, so far as I may seem to you to be led astray by my peculiar love for the works of the artist to whom her letter refers, I yet trust that in most of the remarks I have to make on the points which have perplexed her, I shall be expressing not only your own opinions, but those of every other accomplished artist who is really acquainted—and which of our

possible demonstrations of delight. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood, rejoicing in this occurrence, ever afterwards called that place Borgo Allegri; and this name it has since retained, although in process of time it became enclosed within the walls of the city" (Vasari, *Lives of Painters*. Bohn's edition. London, 1850. Vol. i. p. 41). This well-known anecdote may also be found in Jameson's *Early Italian Painters*, p. 12. Ruskin refers to it again in *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, § 74.]

[1] [From *The Artist and Amateur's Magazine* (edited by E. V. Rippingille), January 1844, pp. 280–287. Reprinted in *Arrows of the Chace*, 1880, vol. i. pp. 14–36.]

[2] [This letter, though not in form a reply to criticisms upon *Modern Painters*, is so in fact; and as furthermore it deals with several matters touched upon in the first volume, it is here included. Ruskin wrote the letter, as the following extracts from his Diary show, in December 1843:—

> "*Dec.* 1, 1843.—Blackguardly letter in *Art Union* and interesting one in Rippingille's thing, to be answered—the last at great length. Working hard all day. *Dec.* 2.—A bad, hard-working day, with my letter; till I see the result, I cannot tell if a good one. *Dec.* 4.—Finished and sent off my letter."

The letter was in reply to one signed (ostensibly or really) "Matilda Y.," printed in *The Artist and Amateur's Magazine*, p. 265, December 1843, and relating to the opposite opinions held by different critics of the works of Turner, which were praised by some as "beautiful and profoundly truthful representations of nature," "legitimate deductions of a mighty intellect, from a long course of scientific practice," whilst others declared them to be "dreary creations of a distempered vision and a disordered mind," "executed without end, aim, or principle." "May not these contradictions," wrote the correspondent, in the passage alluded to by Ruskin, "be in a great measure the result of extreme ignorance of art in the great mass of those persons who take upon themselves the office of critics and reviewers? Can any one be a judge of art whose judgment is not founded on an accurate knowledge of nature? It is scarcely possible that a mere knowledge of pictures, however extensive, can qualify a man for the arduous and responsible duties of public criticism of art."]

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English masters is not?—with the noble system of poetry and philosophy which has been put forth on canvass, during the last forty years, by the great painter who has presented us with the almost unparalleled example of a man winning for himself the unanimous plaudits of his generation and time, and then casting them away like dust, that he may build his monument—ære perennius.[1]

Your correspondent herself, in saying that mere knowledge of *pictures* cannot qualify a man for the office of a critic, has touched the first source of the schisms of the present, and of all time, in questions of pictorial merit. We are overwhelmed with a tribe of critics who are fully imbued with every kind of knowledge which is useful to the picture-dealer, but with none that is important to the artist. They know where a picture *has* been retouched, but not where it *ought* to have been; they know if it has been injured, but not if the injury is to be regretted. They are unquestionable authorities in all matters relating to the panel or the canvass, to the varnish or the vehicle, while they remain in entire ignorance of that which the vehicle conveys. They are well acquainted with the technical qualities of every master's touch; and when their discrimination fails, plume themselves on indisputable tradition, and point triumphantly to the documents of pictorial genealogy. But they never go *quite* far enough back; they stop *one* step short of the real original; they reach the human one, but never the Divine. Whatever, under the present system of study, the connoisseur of the gallery may learn or know, there is one thing he does *not* know,—and that is nature. It is a pitiable thing to hear a man like Dr. Waagen,[2] about to set the seal of his approbation,

[1] [See above, Introduction, p. xxxiii.]

[2] [Gustav Friedrich Waagen, Director of the Berlin Gallery from 1832 until his death in 1868. He was the author of various works on art, amongst them one entitled *Works of Art and Artists in England* (London, 1838), which is that alluded to here. The passage quoted concludes a description of his "first attempt to navigate the watery paths," in a voyage from Hamburg to the London Docks (vol. i. p. 13). His criticism of Turner may be found in the same work (vol. ii. p. 80), where, commenting on Turner's 'Fishermen endeavouring to put their fish on board,' then, as now, in the gallery of Bridgewater House (No. 169), and which was painted as a rival to the great sea-storm of Vandevelde, he writes, that "in the truth of clouds and waves" . . . it is inferior to that picture, compared with which "it appears like a successful piece of scene-painting. The great crowd of amateurs, who ask nothing more of the art, will always far prefer Turner's picture." Ruskin had been reading the book at this time, as appears from the following notes in his Diary:—

> "*Nov.* 21, 1843.—Not so much done to-day, except that I have had the satisfaction of finding Dr. Waagen—of such mighty name as a connoisseur—a most double-dyed ass . . .
>
> "*Nov.* 27.—. . . Got a good deal out of Waagen, but he is an intolerable fool—good authority only in matters of tradition."

Dr. Waagen revised and re-edited his book in a second, entitled, "Treasures of Art in Great Britain" (1854), in which these passages are repeated with slight verbal alterations (vol. i. p. 3, vol. ii. p. 53). In this work he acknowledges his ignorance of Turner at the time the first was written, and gives a high estimate of his genius. "Buildings," he writes, "he treats with peculiar felicity, while the sea in its most varied aspects is equally subservient to his magic brush." He adds, that but for one deficiency, the want of a sound technical basis, he "should not hesitate to recognize Turner as the greatest landscape painter of all time." With regard, however, to the above-named picture, it may be remembered that Ruskin has himself instanced it as one of the marine pictures which Turner spoiled by imitation of Vandevelde. (*Pre-Raphaelitism*, § 37.) For another reference to Waagen, see *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. v. § 1.]

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or the brand of his reprobation, on all the pictures in our island, expressing his insipid astonishment on his first acquaintance with the sea. "For the *first* time I understood the truth of their pictures (Backhuysen's and Van de Velde's,) and the refined art with which, by intervening dashes of sunshine, near or at a distance, and *ships to animate the scene*, they produce such a charming variety on the surface of the sea." For the first time!—and yet this gallery-bred judge, this discriminator of coloured shreds and canvass patches, who has no idea how ships animate the sea, until—charged with the fates of the Royal Academy—he ventures his invaluable person from Rotterdam to Greenwich, will walk up to the work of a man whose brow is hard with the spray of a hundred storms, and characterize it as "wanting in truth of clouds and waves"! Alas for Art, while such judges sit enthroned on their apathy to the beautiful, and their ignorance of the true, and with a canopy of canvass between them and the sky, and a wall of tradition, which may not be broken through, concealing from them the horizon, hurl their darkened verdicts against the works of men, whose night and noon have been wet with the dew of heaven,—dwelling on the deep sea, or wandering among the solitary places of the earth, until they have "made the mountains, waves, and skies a part of them and of their souls."

When information so narrow is yet the whole stock in trade of the highest authorities of the day, what are we to expect from the lowest? Dr. Waagen is a most favourable specimen of the tribe of critics; a man, we may suppose, impartial, above all national or party prejudice, and intimately acquainted with that half of his subject (the technical half) which is all we can reasonably expect to be known by one who has been trained in the painting-room instead of in the fields. No authority is more incontrovertible in all questions of the genuineness of old pictures. He has at least the merit—not common among those who talk most of the old masters—of knowing what he *does* admire, and will not fall into the same raptures before an execrable copy as before the original. If, then, we find a man of this real judgment in those matters to which his attention has been directed, entirely incapable, owing to his ignorance of nature, of estimating a modern picture, what can we hope from those lower critics who are unacquainted even with those technical characters which they have opportunities of learning? What, for instance, are we to anticipate from the sapient lucubrations of the critic—for some years back the disgrace of the pages of *Blackwood*—who in one breath displays his knowledge of nature, by styling a painting of a furze bush in the bed of a mountain torrent a specimen of the "high pastoral," and in the next his knowledge of Art, by informing us that Mr. Lee "reminds him of Gainsborough's best manner, but is inferior to him in composition"![1] We do not mean to say anything against Mr. Lee['s pictures]; but can we forbear to smile at the hopeless innocence of the man's novitiate, who could be reminded by them of landscapes powerful enough in colour to take their place beside those of Rembrandt or Rubens? A little attention will soon convince your correspondent of the utter futility or falsehood of the ordinary critiques of the press; and there could, I believe, even at present, be little doubt in her mind as to the fitting answer to the question, whether we are to take the opinion of the accomplished artist or of the common newsmonger, were it not for a misgiving which, be she conscious of

[1] [See the preface to the second edition of *Modern Painters* (above, p. 18). For the reference to the "high pastoral" see *Blackwood, loc. cit.*, p. 192.]

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it or not, is probably floating in her mind,—whether that can really be *great* Art which has no influence whatsoever on the multitude, and is appreciable only by the initiated few. And this is the real question of difficulty. It is easy to prove that such and such a critic is wrong; but not so, to prove that what everybody dislikes is right. It is fitting to pay respect to Sir Augustus Callcott, but is it so to take his word against all the world?[1]

This inquiry requires to be followed with peculiar caution; for by setting at defiance the judgment of the public, we in some sort may appear to justify that host of petty scribblers, and contemptible painters, who in all time have used the same plea in defence of their rejected works, and have received in consequence merciless chastisement from contemporary and powerful authors or painters, whose reputation was as universal as it was just. "Mes ouvrages," said Rubens to his challenger, Abraham Janssens, "ont été exposés en Italie, et en Espagne, sans que j'aie reçu la nouvelle de leur condamnation. Vous n'avez qu'à soumettre les vôtres à la même épreuve."[2] "Je défie," says Boileau, "tous les amateurs les plus mécontents du public, de me citer un bon livre que le public ait jamais rebuté, à moins qu'ils ne mettent en ce rang leur écrits, de la bonté desquels eux seuls sont persuadés."[3]

Now the fact is, that the whole difficulty of the question is caused by the ambiguity of this word—the "public." Whom does it include? People continually forget that there is a *separate* public for every picture, and for every book. Appealed to with reference to any particular work, the public is that class of persons who possess the knowledge which it presupposes, and the faculties to which it is addressed. With reference to a new edition of Newton's *Principia*, the "public" means little more than the Royal Society. With reference to one of Wordsworth's poems, it means all who have hearts. With reference to one of Moore's, all who have passions. With reference to the works of Hogarth, it means those who have worldly knowledge,—to the works of Giotto, those who have religious faith. Each work must be tested exclusively by the fiat of the *particular* public to whom it is addressed. We will listen to no comments on Newton from people who have no mathematical knowledge; to none on Wordsworth from those who have no hearts; to none on Giotto from those who have no religion. Therefore, when we have to form a judgment of any new work, the question "What do the public say to it?" is indeed of vital importance; but we must always inquire, first, who are *its* public? We must not submit a treatise on moral philosophy to a conclave of horse-jockeys, nor a work of deep artistical research to the writers for the Art Union.

The public, then, we repeat, when referred to with respect to a particular work, consist only of those who have knowledge of its subject, and are possessed of the faculties to which it is addressed.

[1] [Matilda Y., after referring to various hostile criticisms of Turner, had gone on to say that on the other hand, "Sir Augustus Callcott (on visiting a certain collection) made the most obvious distinction in his preference and admiration of the works of Turner, speaking of them as instances of a beautiful and profoundly truthful representation of nature."]

[2] [Abraham Janssens, in his jealousy of Rubens, proposed to him that they should each paint a picture, and submit the rival works to the decision of the public. Ruskin gives Rubens' reply, the tenor of which may be found in any life of the artist—(See Hasselt's *Histoire de Rubens* (Brussels, 1840), p. 48, from which Ruskin quotes; Descamps, vol. i. p. 304; Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*, Bohn's octavo edition, p. 306).]

[3] [Preface to the *Oeuvres Diverses du Sr. Boileau Despreaux* (Paris, 1701).]

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If it fail of touching *these*, the work is a bad one; but it in no degree militates against it that it is rejected by those to whom it does not appeal. To whom, then, let us ask, and to *what* public do the works of Turner appeal? To those only, we reply, who have profound and disciplined acquaintance with nature, ardent poetical feeling, and keen eye for colour (a faculty far more rare than an ear for music). They are deeply-toned poems, intended for all who love poetry, but not for those who delight in mimickries of wine-glasses and nutshells. They are deep treatises on natural phenomena, intended for all who are acquainted with such phenomena, but not for those who, like the painter Barry, are amazed at finding the realities of the Alps grander than the imaginations of Salvator, and assert that they saw the moon from the Mont Cenis four times as big as usual, "from being so much nearer to it"! * And they are studied melodies of exquisite colour, intended for those who have perception of colour; not for those who fancy that all trees are Prussian green. Then comes the question, Were the works of Turner *ever* rejected by any person possessing even partially these qualifications? We answer boldly, never. On the contrary, they are universally hailed by *this* public with an enthusiasm not undeserving in appearance—at least to those who are debarred from sharing in it, of its usual soubriquet—the Turner mania.

Is, then, the number of those who are acquainted with the truth of nature so limited? So it has been asserted by one who knew much both of Art and Nature, and both were glorious in his country.†

"ΙΠ. Οὐ μέντοι εἰώθασιν ἄνθρωποι ὀνομάζειν οὕτως.
ΣΩ. Πότερον, ὦ Ἱππία, οἱ εἰδότες ἢ οἱ μὴ εἰδότες;
ΙΠ. Οἱ πολλοί.
ΣΩ. Εἰσὶ δ' οὗτοι οἱ εἰδότες τἀληθές, οἱ πολλοί;
ΙΠ. Οὐ δῆτα."

—Hippias Major.

* This is a singular instance of the profound ignorance of landscape in which great and intellectual painters of the human form may remain; an ignorance, which commonly renders their remarks on landscape painting nugatory, if not false.[1]

† Plato.—"*Hippias.* Men do not commonly say so.
Socrates. Who do not say so,—those who know, or those who do not know?
Hippias. The multitude.
Socrates. Are then the multitude acquainted with truth?
Hippias. *Certainly not.*"

The answer is put into the mouth of the sophist; but put as an established fact, which he cannot possibly deny.[2]

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[1] [The amazement of the painter is underrated:—"You will believe me much nearer heaven upon Mount Cenis than I was before, or shall probably be again for some time. We passed this mountain on Sunday last, and about seven in the morning were near the top of the road over it, on both sides of which the mountain rises to a very great height, yet so high were we in the valley between them that the moon, which was above the horizon of the mountains, appeared at least five times as big as usual, and much more distinctly marked than I ever saw it through some very good telescopes." —Letter to Edmund Burke, dated Turin, Sept. 24, 1766 (*Works of James Barry, R.A.*, 2 vols., quarto (London, 1809), vol. i. p. 58). For other references to Barry, see above, pp. 82, 145, 311.]

[2] [Hippias Major, 284 E. For another citation from the same dialogue, see above, p. 50.]

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Now, we are not inclined to go quite so far as this. There are many subjects with respect to which the multitude *are* cognizant of truth, or at least of *some* truth; and those subjects may be generally characterised as everything which materially concerns themselves or their interests. The public are acquainted with the nature of their own passions, and the point of their own calamities,—can laugh at the weakness they feel, and weep at the miseries they have experienced; but all the sagacity they possess, be it how great soever, will not enable them to judge of likeness to that which they have never seen, nor to acknowledge principles on which they have never reflected. Of a comedy or a drama, an epigram or a ballad, they are judges from whom there is no appeal; but not of the representation of facts which they have never examined, of beauties which they have never loved. It is not sufficient that the facts or the features of nature be around us, while they are not within us. We may walk day by day through grove and meadow, and scarcely know more concerning them than is known by bird and beast, that the one has shade for the head, and the other softness for the foot. It is not true that "the eye, it cannot choose but see," unless we obey the following condition, and go forth "in a wise passiveness,"[1] free from that plague of our own hearts which brings the shadow of ourselves, and the tumult of our petty interests and impatient passions, across the light and calm of Nature. We do not sit at the feet of our mistress to listen to her teaching; but we seek her only to drag from her that which may suit our purpose, to see in her the confirmation of a theory, or find in her fuel for our pride. Nay, do we often go to her even thus? Have we not rather cause to take to ourselves the full weight of Wordsworth's noble appeal—

> "Vain pleasures of luxurious life!
> For ever with yourselves at strife,
> Through town and country, both deranged
> By affectations interchanged,
> And all the perishable gauds
> That heaven-deserted man applauds.
> When will your hapless patrons learn
> To watch and ponder, to discern
> The freshness, the eternal youth
> Of admiration, sprung from truth,
> From beauty infinitely growing
> Upon a mind with love o'erflowing:
> To sound the depths of every art
> That seeks its wisdom through the heart?"[2]

When *will* they learn it? Hardly, we fear, in this age of steam and iron, luxury and selfishness. We grow more and more artificial day by day, and see less and less worthiness in those pleasures which bring with them no morbid excitement, in that knowledge which affords us no opportunity of display. Your correspondent may rest assured that those who do not *care* for nature, who do not love her, *cannot* see her. A few of her phenomena lie on the surface; the nobler number lie deep, and are the reward of watching and

[1] [Wordsworth: *Poems of Sentiment and Reflection*, i. "Expostulation and Reply."]
[2] [*Memorials of a Tour in Scotland*, 1814, iii. "Effusion."]

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of thought. The artist may choose *which* he will render: no human art can render both. If he paint the surface, he will catch the crowd; if he paint the depth, he will be admired only—but with how deep and fervent admiration, none but they who feel it can tell—by the thoughtful and observant few.

There are some admirable observations on this subject in your December number ("An Evening's Gossip with a Painter"[1]); but there is one circumstance with respect to the works of Turner which yet further limits the number of their admirers. They are not prosaic statements of the phenomena of nature,—they are statements of them under the influence of ardent feeling; they are, in a word, the most fervent and real poetry which the English nation is at present producing. Now, not only is this proverbially an age in which poetry is little cared for; but even with those who have most love of it, and most need of it, it requires, especially if high and philosophical, an attuned, quiet, and exalted frame of mind for its enjoyment; and if dragged into the midst of the noisy interests of every-day life, may easily be made ridiculous or offensive. Wordsworth recited, by Mr. Wakley,[2] in the House of Commons, in the middle of a financial debate, would sound, in all probability, very like Mr. Wakley's own verses. Wordsworth, read in the stillness of a mountain hollow, has the force of the mountain waters. What would be the effect of a passage of Milton recited in the middle of a pantomime, or of a dreamy stanza of Shelley upon the Stock Exchange? Are we to judge of the nightingale by hearing it sing in broad daylight in Cheapside? For just such a judgment do we form of Turner by standing before his pictures in the Royal Academy. It is a strange thing that the public never seem to suspect that there may be a poetry in painting, to meet which, some preparation of sympathy, some harmony of circumstance, is required; and that it is just as impossible to see half-a-dozen great pictures as to read half-a-dozen great poems at the same time, if their tendencies or their tones of feeling be contrary or discordant. Let us imagine what would be the effect on the mind of any man of feeling, to whom an eager friend, desirous of impressing upon him the merit of different poets, should read successively, and without a

[1] [See *The Artist and Amateur's Magazine*, p. 248. The article named was written in duologue, and in the passage alluded to "Palette," an artist, points out to his companion "Chatworthy," who represents the general public, that "next to the highest authorities in Art are the pure, natural, untainted, highly educated, and intelligent *few*." The argument is continued over some pages, but although the *Magazine* is not now readily accessible, it will not be thought necessary to go farther into the discussion.]

[2] [Mr. Thomas Wakley (1795–1862), at this time M.P. for Finsbury, and coroner for Middlesex. He was the founder of the *Lancet*, and took a deep interest in medicine, which he at one time practised. The allusion here is to Wakley's speech in opposing the second reading of the Copyright Bill on April 6, 1842. He ridiculed the claims of authors, and recited, in illustration, Wordsworth's "I met Louisa in the shade," and the lines "To a Butterfly." "If they give a poet," he said, "an evening sky, dew, daisies, roses, and a rivulet, he might make a very respectable poem. Why, anybody might do it!" Whereupon, an hon. member exclaimed, "Try it." "He had tried it," rejoined Wakley, "and there (pointing to Monckton-Milnes) is an honourable gentleman who has tried it and is a poet of the first water. He thought, however, that a member of society might employ his talents to much better advantage than in the composition of such productions as he had quoted."]

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pause, the following passages, in which lie something of the prevailing character of the works of six of our greatest modern artists :—

LANDSEER.

"His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
Show'd he was nane o' Scotland's dougs,
But whalpit some place far abroad
Whar sailors gang to fish for cod." [1]

MARTIN.

"Far in the horizon to the north appear'd
From skirt to skirt, a fiery region, stretched
In battailous aspect, and nearer view
Bristled with upright beams innumerable
Of rigid spears, and helmets throng'd, and shields
Various, with boastful argument portray'd."

WILKIE.

"The risin' moon began to glow'r
The distant Cumnock hills out owre;
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel';
But whether she had three or fowr,
I couldna tell."

EASTLAKE.

"And thou, who tell'st me to forget,
Thy looks are wan, thine eyes are wet."

STANFIELD.

"Ye mariners of England,
Who guard our native seas,
Whose flag has braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze."

TURNER.

"The point of one white star is quivering still,
Deep in the orange light of widening dawn,
Beyond the purple mountains. Through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it, now it fades: it gleams again,
As the waves fall, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air,
'Tis lost! and through yon peaks of cloudlike snow
The roseate sunlight quivers." [2]

Precisely to such advantage as the above passages, so placed,* appear, are the works of any painter of mind seen in the Academy. None suffer

* It will be felt at once that the more serious and higher passages generally suffer most. But Stanfield, little as it may be thought, suffers grievously in the Academy, just as the fine passage from Campbell is ruined by its position between the perfect tenderness of Byron and Shelley. The more vulgar a picture is, the better it bears the Academy.

[1] [The references to this and the five passages following are (1) Burns, "The Twa Dogs"; (2) Milton, "Paradise Lost," vi. 79; (3) Burns, "Death and Doctor Hornbook"; (4) Byron, "Hebrew Melodies," "Oh! snatched away in beauty's bloom"; (5) Campbell; and (6) Shelley, "Prometheus Unbound," Act ii. Sc. 1.]

[2] [For another comparison of Shelley with Turner, see above, p. 364, and *cf.* vol. ii. of *Modern Painters*, sec. ii. ch. iv. § 18.]

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more than Turner's, which are not only interfered with by the prosaic pictures around them, but neutralize each other. Two works of his, side by side, destroy each other to a dead certainty, for each is so vast, so complete, so demandant of every power, so sufficient for every desire of the mind, that it is utterly impossible for two to be comprehended together. Each must have the undivided intellect, and each is destroyed by the attraction of the other; and it is the chief power and might of these pictures, that they are works for the closet and the heart—works to be dwelt upon separately and devotedly, and then chiefly when the mind is in its highest tone, and desirous of a beauty which may be food for its immortality. It is the very stamp and essence of the purest poetry, that it can only be so met and understood; and that the clash of common interests, and the roar of the selfish world, must be hushed about the heart, before it can hear the still, small voice, wherein rests the power communicated from the Holiest.*

Can, then,—will be, if I mistake not, the final inquiry of your correspondent,—can, then, we ordinary mortals,—can I, who am not Sir Augustus Callcott, nor Sir Francis Chantrey, ever derive any pleasure from works of this lofty character? Heaven forbid, we reply, that it should be otherwise. *Nothing* more is necessary for the appreciation of them, than that which is necessary for the appreciation of any great writer,—the quiet study of him with an humble heart. There are, indeed, technical qualities, difficulties overcome, and principles developed, which are reserved for the enjoyment of the artist; but these do not add to the influence of the picture. On the contrary, we must break through its charm, before we can comprehend its means, and "murder to dissect." The picture is intended, not for artists alone, but for all who love what it portrays; and so little doubt have we of the capacity of all to understand the works in question, that we have the most confident expectation, within the next fifty years, of seeing the name of Turner placed on the same impregnable height with that of Shakspeare.[1] Both have committed errors of taste and judgment. In both it is, or will be, heresy even to feel those errors, so entirely are they over-balanced by the gigantic powers of whose impetuosity they are the result. So soon as the public are convinced, by the maintained testimony of high authority, that Turner is worth understanding, they will try to understand him; and if they try, they can. Nor are they, now, as is commonly thought, despised or defied by him. He has

* "Although it is in verse that the most consummate skill in composition is to be looked for, and all the artifices of language displayed, yet it is in verse only that we throw off the yoke of the world, and are, as it were, privileged to utter our deepest and holiest feelings. Poetry in this respect may be called the salt of the earth. We express in it, and receive in it, sentiments for which, were it not for this permitted medium, the usages of the world would neither allow utterance nor acceptance."—*Southey's Colloquies.*[2] Such allowance is never made to the painter. In him, inspiration is called insanity,—in him, the sacred fire, possession.

[1] ["This Turner, of whom you have known so little while he was living among you, will one day take his place beside Shakspeare and Verulam, in the annals of the light of England." See *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (1854), § 101.]

[2] [*Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society.* Colloquy xiv. (vol. ii. p. 399, in Murray's edition, 1829). Ruskin had at this time been reading the book "with much pleasure" (Diary, Dec. 4, 1843).]

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too much respect for them to endeavour to please them by falsehood. He will not win for himself a hearing by the betrayal of his message.

Finally, then, we would recommend your correspondent, first, to divest herself of every atom of lingering respect or regard for the common criticism of the press, and to hold fast by the authority of Callcott, Chantrey, Landseer, and Stanfield;[1] and this, not because we would have her *slavishly* subject to any authority but that of her own eyes and reason, but because we would not have her blown about with every wind of doctrine,[2] before she has convinced her reason, or learned to use her eyes. And if she can draw at all, let her make careful studies of any natural objects that may happen to come in her way,—sticks, leaves, or stones,—and of distant atmospheric effects on groups of objects; not for the sake of the drawing itself, but for the sake of the powers of attention and accurate observation which thus only can be cultivated. And let her make the study, not thinking of this artist or of that; not conjecturing what Harding would have done, or Stanfield, or Callcott, with her subject; not trying to draw in a bold style, or a free style, or any other style; but drawing *all* she *sees*, as far as may be in her power, earnestly, faithfully, unselectingly; and, which is perhaps the more difficult task of the two, *not* drawing what she does *not* see. Oh, if people did but know how many lines nature *suggests* without *showing*, what different art should we have! And let her never be discouraged by ill success. She will seldom have gained more knowledge than when she most feels her failure. Let her use every opportunity of examining the works of Turner; let her try to copy them, then try to copy some one else's, and observe which presents most of that kind of difficulty which she found in copying nature. Let her, if possible, extend her acquaintance with wild natural scenery of every kind and character, endeavouring in each species of scenery to distinguish those features which are expressive and harmonious from those which are unaffecting or incongruous; and after a year or two of such discipline as this, let her judge for herself. No authority need then, or can then, be very influential with her. Her own pleasure in works of true greatness* will be too real, too instinctive, to be persuaded, or laughed out of her. We bid her, therefore, heartily good-speed, with this final warning:—Let her beware, in going to nature, of taking with her the commonplace dogmas or dicta of Art. Let her not look for what is like Titian, or like Claude, for composed form, or arranged chiaroscuro; but believe that everything which God has made is beautiful, and that everything which nature teaches is true. Let her beware, above everything, of that wicked pride which makes man think he can dignify God's glorious creations, or exalt the majesty of His universe. Let her be humble, we repeat, and

* We have not sufficiently expressed our concurrence in the opinion of her friend, that Turner's modern works are his greatest. His early ones are nothing but amplifications of what others have done, or hard studies of every-day truth. His later works, no one but himself could have conceived: they are the result of the most exalted imagination, acting with the knowledge acquired by *means* of his former works.[3]

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[1] [All cited by Matilda Y. as admirers of Turner.]
[2] [Ephesians, iv. 14: "carried about with every wind of doctrine."]
[3] [*Cf.* above, p. xxxiii. *n.*, and preface to ed. 3, p. 53.]

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earnest. Truth was never sealed, if so sought. And once more we bid her good-speed in the words of our poet-moralist:—

"Enough of Science and of Art:
Seal up these barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches, and receives."[1]

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient humble servant,

THE AUTHOR OF "MODERN PAINTERS."

3. REFLECTIONS IN WATER[2]

[*To the Editor of "The Artist and Amateur's Magazine."*]

SIR,—The phenomena of light and shade, rendered to the eye by the surface or substance of water, are so intricate and so multitudinous, that had I wished fully to investigate, or even fully to state them, a volume instead of a page would have been required for the task. In the paragraphs[3] which I devoted to the subject I expressed, as briefly as possible, the laws which are of most general application—with which artists are indeed so universally familiar, that I conceived it altogether unnecessary to prove or support them: but since I have expressed them in as few words as possible, I cannot afford to have any of those words missed or disregarded; and therefore when I say that on *clear* water, *near* the eye, there is no shadow, I must not be understood to mean that on *muddy* water, *far* from the eye, there is no shadow. As, however, your correspondent appears to deny my position in toto, and as many persons, on their first glance at the subject, might be inclined to do the same, you will perhaps excuse me for occupying a page or two with a more explicit statement, both of facts and principles, than my limits admitted in the *Modern Painters*.

[1] [Wordsworth: *Poems of Sentiment and Reflection*, ii. "The Tables Turned" (1798), being the companion poem to that quoted above, p. 650. The second line should read, "Close up these barren leaves."]

[2] [From *The Artist and Amateur's Magazine* (edited by E. V. Rippingille), February 1844, pp. 314–319. Reprinted in *Arrows of the Chace*, 1880, vol. i. pp. 283–298. In the first edition of *Modern Painters* (p. 522, above) it was stated that "the horizontal lines cast by clouds upon the sea are not shadows, but reflections"; and that "on clear water near the eye there can never be even the appearance of shadow." This statement being questioned in a letter to the *Art Union Journal* (November 1843), and that letter being itself criticised in a review of *Modern Painters* in *The Artist and Amateur's Magazine*, p. 262 (December 1843), there appeared in the last-named periodical two letters upon the subject, of which one was from J. H. Maw, the correspondent of the *Art Union*, and the other—that reprinted here—a reply from "The Author of *Modern Painters*." Ruskin wrote it (as a note in his Diary shows) on Jan. 10, 1844.]

[3] [The passages in *Modern Painters* referred to in this letter were considerably altered and enlarged in later editions of the work; the original version is here given at pp. 520–527.]

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First, for the experimental proof of my assertion that "on clear water, near the eye, there is no shadow."[1] Your correspondent's trial with the tub is somewhat cumbrous and inconvenient;[2] a far more simple experiment will settle the matter. Fill a tumbler with water; throw into it a narrow strip of white paper; put the tumbler into sunshine; dip your finger into the water between the paper and the sun, so as to throw a shadow across the paper and on the water. The shadow will of course be distinct on the paper, but on the water absolutely and totally invisible.

This simple trial of the fact, and your explanation of the principle given in your ninth Number,[3] are sufficient proof and explanation of my assertion; and if your correspondent requires authority as well as ocular demonstration, he has only to ask Stanfield or Copley Fielding, or any other good painter of sea: the latter, indeed, was the person who first pointed out the fact to me when a boy. What then, it remains to be determined, are those lights and shades on the sea, which, for the sake of clearness, and because they appear such to the ordinary observer, I have spoken of as "horizontal lines," and which have every appearance of being cast by the clouds like real shadows? I imagined that I had been sufficiently explicit on this subject both at pages 330 and 363:[4] but your correspondent appears to have confused himself by inaccurately receiving the term *shadow* as if it meant darkness of any kind; whereas my second sentence—"every *darkness* on water is reflection, not shadow,"—might have shown him that I used it in its particular sense, as meaning the absence of *positive* light on a visible surface. Thus, in endeavouring to support his assertion that the shadows on the sea are as distinct as on a grass field, he says that they are so by contrast with the "light *reflected* from its polished surface;" thus showing at once that he has been speaking and thinking all along, not of shadow, but of the absence of reflected light—an absence which is no more shadow than the absence of the image of a piece of white paper in a mirror is shadow on the mirror.

The question, therefore, is one of terms rather than of things; and before proceeding it will be necessary for me to make your correspondent understand thoroughly what is meant by the term shadow as opposed to that of reflection.

Let us stand on the sea-shore on a cloudless night, with a full moon over the sea, and a swell on the water. Of course a long line of splendour will be seen on the waves under the moon, reaching from the horizon to our very feet. But are those waves between the moon and us *actually* more illuminated than any other part of the sea? Not one whit. The whole surface of the sea is under the same full light, but the waves between the moon and us are the only ones which are in a position to reflect that light to our eyes. The sea

[1] [§ 9, p. 521, above.]

[2] [See *The Artist and Amateur's Magazine*, p. 313, where the author of the letter, to which this is a reply, adduced in support of his views the following experiment, viz.: to put a tub filled with clear water in the sunlight, and then taking an opaque screen with a hole cut in it, to place the same in such a position as to intercept the light falling upon the tub. Then, he argued, cover the hole over, and the tub will be in shadow; uncover it again, and a patch of light will fall on the water, proving that water is *not* "insusceptible of light as well as shadow."]

[3] [In the review of *Modern Painters* mentioned above.]

[4] [Of the first edition of the first volume of *Modern Painters*. The passages will be found in this ed. at pp. 521, 550.]

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on both sides of that path of light is in perfect darkness—almost black. But is it so from shadow? Not so,—for there is nothing to intercept the moonlight from it: it is so from position, because it cannot reflect any of the rays which fall on it to our eyes, but reflects instead the dark vault of the night sky. Both the darkness and the light on it, therefore—and they are as violently contrasted as may well be—are nothing but reflections, the whole surface of the water being under one blaze of moonlight, entirely unshaded by any intervening object whatsoever.[1]

Now, then, we can understand the cause of the chiaroscuro of the sea by daylight with lateral sun. Where the sunlight reaches the water, every ripple, wave, or swell reflects to the eye from some of its planes either the image of the sun or some portion of the neighbouring bright sky. Where the cloud interposes between the sun and sea, all these luminous reflections are prevented, and the raised planes of the waves reflect only the dark under-surface of the cloud; and hence, by the multiplication of the images, spaces of light and shade are produced, which lie on the sea precisely in the position of real or positive lights and shadows—corresponding to the outlines of the clouds—laterally cast, and therefore seen in addition to, and at the same time with, the ordinary or direct reflection, vigorously contrasted, the lights being often a blaze of gold, and the shadows a dark leaden grey; and yet, I repeat, they are no more real lights, or real shadows, on the sea, than the image of a black coat is a shadow on a mirror, or the image of white paper a light upon it.

Are there, then, *no* shadows whatsoever upon the sea? Not so. My assertion is simply that there are none on clear water near the eye. I shall briefly state a few of the circumstances which give rise to real shadow in distant effect.

I. Any admixture of opaque colouring matter, as of mud, chalk, or powdered granite, renders water capable of distinct shadow, which is cast on the earthy and solid particles suspended in the liquid. None of the seas on our south-eastern coast are so clear as to be absolutely incapable of shade; and the faint tint, though scarcely perceptible to a near observer,* is sufficiently manifest when seen in large extent from a distance, especially when contrasted, as your correspondent says, with reflected lights. This was one reason for my introducing the words—"near the eye."

There is, however, a peculiarity in the appearances of such shadows which requires especial notice. It is not merely the transparency of water, but its polished surface, and consequent reflective power, which render it incapable of shadow. A perfectly opaque body, if its power of reflection be perfect, receives no shadow (this I shall presently prove); and therefore, in any lustrous body, the incapability of shadow is in proportion to the power of reflection. Now the power of reflection in water varies with the angle of the impinging ray, being of course greatest when that angle is least: and thus, when we look along the water at a low angle, its power of reflection maintains its incapability

* Of course, if water be perfectly foul, like that of the Rhine or Arve, it receives a shadow nearly as well as mud. Yet the succeeding observations on its reflective power are applicable to it, even in this state.

[1] [It may be worth noting that the optical delusion above explained is described at some length by Mr. Herbert Spencer (*The Study of Sociology*, 1874, p. 191), as one of the commonest instances of popular ignorance.]

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of shadow to a considerable extent, in spite of its containing suspended opaque matter; whereas, when we look *down* upon water from a height, as we then receive from it only rays which have fallen on it at a large angle, a great number of those rays are unreflected from the surface, but penetrate beneath the surface, and are then reflected * from the suspended opaque matter: thus rendering shadows clearly visible which, at a small angle, would have been altogether unperceived.

II. But it is not merely the presence of opaque matter which renders shadows visible on the sea seen from a height. The eye, when elevated above the water, receives rays reflected from the bottom, of which, when *near* the water, it is insensible. I have seen the bottom at seven fathoms, so that I could count its pebbles, from the cliffs of the Cornish coast; and the broad effect of the light and shade of the bottom is discernible at enormous depths. In fact, it is difficult to say at what depth the rays returned from the bottom become absolutely ineffective—perhaps not until we get fairly out into blue water. Hence, with a white or sandy shore, shadows forcible enough to afford conspicuous variety of colour may be seen from a height of two or three hundred feet.

III. The actual colour of the sea itself is an important cause of shadow in distant effect. Of the ultimate causes of local colour in water I am not ashamed to confess my total ignorance, for I believe Sir David Brewster himself has not elucidated them.[1] Every river in Switzerland has a different hue. The Lake of Geneva, commonly blue, appears, under a fresh breeze, striped with blue and bright red; and the hues of coast-sea are as various as those of a dolphin; but, whatever be the cause of their variety, their intensity is, of course, dependent on the presence of sunlight. The sea under shade is commonly of a cold grey hue; in sunlight it is susceptible of vivid and exquisite colouring: and thus the forms of clouds are traced on its surface, not by light and shade, but by variation of *colour*,—by greys opposed to greens, blues to rose-tints, etc. All such phenomena are chiefly visible from a height

* It must always be remembered that there are two kinds of reflection,—one from polished bodies, giving back rays of light unaltered; the other from unpolished bodies, giving back rays of light altered. By the one reflection we see the images of other objects on the surface of the reflecting object; by the other we are made aware of that surface itself. The difference between these two kinds of reflection has not been well worked by writers on optics; but the great distinction between them is, that the rough body reflects most rays when the angle at which the rays impinge is largest, and the polished body when the angle is smallest. It is the reflection from polished bodies exclusively which I usually indicate by the term; and that from rough bodies I commonly distinguish as "positive light;" but as I have here used the term in its general sense, the explanation of the distinction becomes necessary. All light and shade on matter is caused by reflection of some kind; and the distinction made throughout this paper between reflected and positive light, and between *real* and pseudo shadow, is nothing more than the distinction between two kinds of reflection.

I believe some of Bouguer's[2] experiments have been rendered inaccurate,—not in their general result, nor in *ratio* of quantities, but in the quantities themselves,—by the difficulty of distinguishing between the two kinds of reflected rays.

[1] [See Ruskin's *Enquiries on the Causes of the Colour of the Water of the Rhine* (1834), and the note thereto appended in Vol. I. p. 193.]

[2] [Pierre Bouguer (1698–1758), author of, amongst other works, the *Traité d'Optique sur la Gradation de la Lumière.*]

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and a distance; and thus furnished me with additional reasons for introducing the words—"near the eye."

IV. Local colour is, however, the cause of one beautiful kind of chiaroscuro, visible when we are close to the water—shadows cast, not *on* the waves, but through them, as through misty air. When a wave is raised so as to let the sunlight through a portion of its body, the contrast of the transparent chrysoprase green of the illuminated parts with the darkness of the shadowed is exquisitely beautiful.

Hitherto, however, I have been speaking chiefly of the *transparency* of water as the source of its incapability of shadow. I have still to demonstrate the effect of its polished surface.

Let your correspondent pour an ounce or two of quicksilver into a flat white saucer, and, throwing a strip of white paper into the middle of the mercury, as before into the water, interpose an upright bit of stick between it and the sun: he will then have the pleasure of seeing the shadow of the stick sharply defined on the paper and the edge of the saucer, while on the intermediate portion of mercury it will be totally invisible.* Mercury is a perfectly opaque body, and its incapability of shadow is entirely owing to the perfection of its polished surface. Thus, then, whether water be considered as transparent or reflective, (and according to its position it is one or the other, or partially both—for in the exact degree that it *is* the one, it is *not* the other,) it is equally incapable of shadow. But as on distant water, so also on near water, when broken, pseudo shadows take place, which are in reality nothing more than the aggregates of reflections. In the illuminated space of the wave, from every plane turned towards the sun there flashes an image of the sun; in the *un*-illuminated space there is seen on every such plane only the dark image of the interposed body. Every wreath of the foam, every jet of the spray, reflects in the sunlight a thousand diminished suns, and refracts their rays into a thousand colours; while in the shadowed parts the same broken parts of the wave appear only in dead, cold white; and thus pseudo shadows are caused, occupying the position of real shadows, defined in portions of their edge with equal sharpness: and yet, I repeat, they are no more real shadows than the image of a piece of black cloth is a shadow on a mirror.

But your correspondent will say, "What does it matter to me, or to the artist, whether they *are* shadows or not? They are darkness, and they supply the place of shadows, and that is all I contend for." Not so. They do *not* supply the place of shadows; they are divided from them by this broad distinction, that while shadow causes uniform deepening of the ground-tint in the objects which it affects, these pseudo shadows are merely portions of that ground-tint itself undeepened, but cut out and rendered conspicuous by flashes of light irregularly disposed around it. The ground-tint both of shadowed and illumined parts is precisely the same—a pure pale grey, catching as it moves the hues of the sky and clouds; but on this, in the illumined spaces, there fall touches and flashes of intense reflected light, which are absent in the shadow. If, for the sake of illustration, we consider the wave as hung with a certain quantity of lamps, irregularly disposed, the shape and extent of a shadow on that wave will be marked by the lamps being all put out within its influence, while the tint of the water itself is entirely unaffected by it.

* The mercury must of course be perfectly clean.

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The works of Stanfield will supply your correspondent with perfect and admirable illustrations of this principle. His water-tint is equally clear and luminous whether in sunshine or shade; but the whole lustre of the illumined parts is attained by bright isolated touches of reflected light.

The works of Turner will supply us with still more striking examples, especially in cases where slanting sunbeams are cast from a low sun along breakers, when the shadows will be found in a state of perpetual transition, now defined for an instant on a mass of foam, then lost in an interval of smooth water, then coming through the body of a transparent wave, then passing off into the air upon the dust of the spray—supplying, as they do in nature, exhaustless combinations of ethereal beauty. From Turner's habit of choosing for his subjects sea much broken with foam, the shadows in his works are more conspicuous than in Stanfield's, and may be studied to greater advantage. To the works of these great painters, those of Vandevelde may be opposed for instances of the impossible. The black shadows of this latter painter's near waves supply us with innumerable and most illustrative examples of everything which sea shadows are *not*.

Finally, let me recommend your correspondent, if he wishes to obtain perfect knowledge of the effects of shadow on water, whether calm or agitated, to go through a systematic examination of the works of Turner. He will find *every* phenomenon of this kind noted in them with the most exquisite fidelity. The Alnwick Castle,[1] with the shadow of the bridge cast on the dull surface of the moat, and mixing with the reflection, is the most finished piece of water-painting with which I am acquainted. Some of the recent Venices have afforded exquisite instances of the change of colour in water caused by shadow, the illumined water being transparent and green, while in the shade it loses its own colour, and takes the blue of the sky.

But I have already, sir, occupied far too many of your valuable pages, and I must close the subject, although hundreds of points occur to me which I have not yet illustrated.* The discussion respecting the Grotto of Capri is somewhat irrelevant, and I will not enter upon it, as thousands of laws respecting light and colour are there brought into play, in addition to the water's incapability of shadow.[2] But it is somewhat singular that the Newtonian principle, which your correspondent enunciates in conclusion, is the *very cause* of the incapability of shadow which he disputes. I am not, however, writing a treatise on optics, and therefore can at present do no more than simply explain what the Newtonian law actually signifies, since, by your correspondent's enunciation of it, "pellucid substances reflect light only from their surfaces," an inexperienced reader might be led to conclude that *opaque* bodies reflected light from something else than their surfaces.

The law is, that whatever number of rays escape reflection at the surface

* Among other points, I have not explained why water, though it has no shadow, has a dark side. The cause of this is the Newtonian law noticed below, that water weakens the rays passing through its mass, though it reflects none; and, also, that it reflects rays from both surfaces.

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[1] [See above, pp. 235, 423.]

[2] [The review of *Modern Painters* had mentioned the Grotto of Capri, near Naples, as "a very beautiful illustration of the great quantity of light admitted or contained in water," and on this Mr. J. H. Maw had commented.]

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of water, pass through its body without further reflection, being therein weakened, but not reflected; but that, where they pass *out* of the water again, as, for instance, if there be air-bubbles at the bottom, giving an under-surface to the water, there a number of rays are reflected from that under-surface, and do *not* pass out of the water, but return to the eye; thus causing the bright luminosity of the under bubbles. Thus water reflects from both its surfaces—it reflects it when passing out as well as when entering; but it reflects none whatever from its own interior mass. If it did, it would be capable of shadow.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR OF "MODERN PAINTERS."

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III

LETTERS ON "MODERN PAINTERS," VOL. I[1]

1. TO SAMUEL PROUT[2]

21st February [1844].[3]

My dear Sir,—I have been very busy lately at the British Gallery,[4] etc., or I should before have taken the privilege of replying more fully to your most gratifying letter,[5] notwithstanding the difficulty I always have in answering your letters, because you put me in a false position, and overwhelm me with expressions of deference to my crude opinions which give me great pain. However, I am not going thereby to be debarred from the advantages I can derive from your advice—and so I have a question or two to ask about the subjects of your last letter.

I do not quite understand the kind of execution to which you refer in the "favourites," and I should like to know definitely, because I constantly find myself pleased with pictures at first sight, which, if I had them by me for some time, I should be the first to condemn; and therefore I am very doubtful of my judgment of the works of painters of which I have no examples on the room walls.

Do you allude to Harding? I think he is going all wrong just now, and losing himself in his execution, but I think his execution *is itself* very wonderful. I scarcely know anything with which I have been more impressed

[1] [The following letters refer in part to Ruskin's work on vol. ii. of *Modern Painters*; but as they were written in reply to remarks made by his friends on vol. i., and as, moreover, they describe the aim and spirit of that earlier work, it seems better to include them here.]

[2] [The original of this letter is at Brantwood, bound up with the MS. of the Preface to the *Notes on Prout and Hunt* (1879).]

[3] [Date added from the postmark, Camberwell Green, Feb. 21, 1844.]

[4] [*i.e.* the exhibition of the Gallery of British Artists (the gallery of the Society of British Artists) in Suffolk Street, founded in 1824. On Feb. 12, 1844, Ruskin notes in his Diary:—

> ". . . Went in with my mother to see British Gallery. Everything atrociously bad—Danby worst of—man of genius indeed—what next? I must take careful notes there, however."]

[5] [For Prout's opinion of *Modern Painters*, vol. i., see *Præterita*, ii. ch. ix. § 170; and with regard to this letter, see above, Introduction, p. xlii. Prout had apparently felt that the book was a little hard on him, in comparison with some of the author's "favourites."]

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than with the *quiet* velocity, the tranquil swiftness of his pencil as he works. I have seen artists blotting and splashing, falling and fumbling to the right in a most wonderful way; but Harding's cool, straightforward, gliding, decision impressed me exceedingly. The expressions respecting sharp-edged rocks do not indeed agree with those of "softening outline,"[1] but they refer to different circumstances both of subject and aim. Nature does not always show either hard or soft lines—each is necessary to contrast with the other and exhibit it. I have praised Turner quite as much for the sharp edges of his shadows as for the soft outlines of his forms, and the praise of Harding's execution refers only to his rapid attainment of what he wants of nature's severer lines—in their right places. He commonly selects subjects which possess their sharper qualities, and effects which induce them; and where he has even erred in the application of his powers, one may still praise the power in itself, and the execution in itself. If you notice the passages relating to Harding, I think you will find that I have rather directed attention to the power of the parts, than to the balance or relations of the whole. But you must tell me what you allude to more distinctly, and then I shall be better able to excuse myself, or shall see where I am wrong.

I have been the more bold in praising Harding, because I know him to be an earnest, industrious, unflinching workman, and never to fail from affectation or indolence. He never lays down a touch without *thinking;* he never lays down any to show his dexterity, or catch the eye. He works with an image of nature in his mind, which may be imperfect or erroneous, but which he *does* struggle for ardently and honestly, and if he ever leaves a stroke crude and raw, it is because he fears it would be still less like what he wanted if he were to retouch it, not because he wishes to *appear* to do all he wants at once. He is going astray just now in blots and body colour, but he will come right again, I think; there is a fine energy about him. If I could only put into him a little feeling like yours of the character of places, and make him understand the beauty and majesty of subject, instead of looking only for a good arrangement and an agreeable chiaroscuro, I think he would be a great man. I fear, however, he has not depth of feeling enough, and that he will remain the mere clever draughtsman. I cannot get him into anything like solemnity or intensity: he puts coal barges at Venice instead of gondolas, and sinks the Alps for the sake of a post and a cow. Don't show him this letter, though, for I have derived infinite instruction from him, and shall still; and there is no man whose simplicity of aim and effort I more respect, if I could only get him to draw worse, and feel more.

I have been surprised on looking back to the page to which you refer[2] to see that you do indeed cut a "sorry figure in the volume," but you know you are above *Canaletti* still. However, I must so far endeavour to justify myself as to state what I allude to as "mannerism," etc., and what was running in my head at the time.

I have already said—and I mean to say it more effectively—that I think your drawings the most characteristic, impressive, and mentally truthful of

[1] [The expressions regarding Harding's "sharp-edged rocks" are in pt. ii. sec. iv. ch. iv. § 10 (p. 479, above); Prout had probably contrasted the passage with what is elsewhere said (eds. 1 and 2) about the need of "soft and melting lines" in certain outlines (p. 323, above).]

[2] [See above, pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. § 8 (eds. 1 and 2), p. 256. The reference to Prout's "mannerism" is in the note to that passage.]

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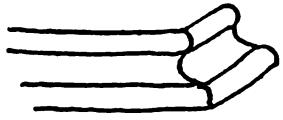
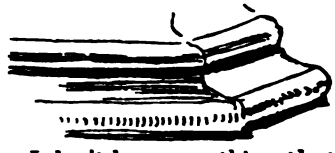
any architectural paintings of the day. I find they retain their power over me without the least diminution, and that there is a refreshing life and force about them which is an unequivocal stamp of real genius. But, at the same time, I am always struck with wonder when I look too closely at the means by which they are produced, and when I see this given for the capital of a Corinthian column (*vide*, temple of Pallas), and this for a piece of drapery, I cannot but call it—mannerism; for a Corinthian capital is not composed of such lines, nor is a piece of drapery terminated by a thick outline chipped like stone. Yet far be it from me to say that *such* mannerism is wrong. If the expression is right, the means must be; but I cannot understand *how* they are right, or how they produce that right impression which I feel they do. And I wish you would tell me how you account to yourself for the truthful effect of means apparently illegitimate, and which you must yourself feel to be so, just as much as I do. In your Piazzetta, Venice, the base of the column on the right is worked thus, etc. Now there are of course no such lines in nature, but delicate shadows, which Harding would have given thus (not very delicate, certainly, but still you will understand what I mean). Now Harding's would be *right* in means, and yours are certainly wrong or inadequate, and yet your work, as a whole, produces tenfold the impression. The meaning of this I cannot fathom. I don't know anything that puzzles me more. I wish you would kindly give me your own explanation of it.





I have much more to say, but I have not time to say it now. I know you wish me to be open with you, and indeed you have full right to know all my feelings on this and every other subject connected with art. I will trespass upon you again soon; meantime, all join in kindest regards and best wishes for your health and happiness. I am much delighted by the expressions of fresh and poetical feeling which occur in your letters: they are not those of deadened emotion or weakened power. Long may you so feel! Take a little ramble south this summer, and let me meet you in Auvergne, or on the Lago Maggiore; you will find yourself as young as ever—there.[1]

Ever, my dear sir,

Gratefully and respectfully[2] yours,

J. Ruskin.

Samuel Prout, Esq., F.S.A.,
Hastings.

[1] [Ruskin was abroad in 1844 from May 14 to August 24, but it does not appear that Prout joined him. Prout was at this time in poor health, and very low-spirited: see the letters in J. L. Roget's *History of the Old Water-Colour Society*, ii. p. 55; he died in 1852. He had been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1830.]

[2] [Corrected from "affectionately."]

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2. TO THE REV. OSBORNE GORDON[1]

March 10*th*, 1844.

DEAR GORDON,—. . . I received with much gratitude your kind note. I wish you had spoken on the subject while you were here,[2] as it is scarcely one whose numerous bearings can be fitly touched by the slow travel of the pen. I imagined there was something on your mind when I saw you; there was a slight air of disapproving uncomfortableness in you which I knew and could not mistake; it used to come sometimes in '39 when I couldn't read my Aristophanes.

Well, you ask me if the cultivation of taste be the proper "ergon" of a man's life,[3] and you desire me to consider the matter as a thesis, separate from my own case. This is impolitic of you, for you thereby deprive yourself of a most powerful ally—conscience. If you were to put it straight to *me* to say whether *I* am right in thinking of nothing but pictures, I might possibly say No; but if you put it to me whether all men who are living happy lives in the cultivation of art and observance of nature, are also living sinful lives —I should be inclined to take a very different view of the question, and still say *No*—and a much louder *No* than the preceding; therefore, if you please, I will give you the advantage which you would deny yourself, and take my own case for discussion, especially as therein I am better acquainted with ultimate motives than in other people's.

First, then, your expression—cultivation of *taste*—is too vague in two ways; —it does not note the differences between cultivation of one's own taste—and of other people's;—and it leaves open to various interpretations that most vague of all words—taste—which means, in some people's mouth, the faculty of knowing a Claude from a copy, and, in others, the passionate love of all the works of God. Now observe—I am not engaged in selfish cultivation of critical acumen, but in ardent endeavour to spread the love and knowledge of art among all classes;—and secondly, that the love and knowledge I would communicate are not of technicalities and fancies of men, but of the universal system of nature—as interpreted and rendered stable by art;—and, thirdly, observe that all that I hope to be able to do will be accomplished, if my health holds, in two or three years at the very utmost;[4] and then consider whether the years from four to seven and twenty could be, on the whole, much better employed—*or are*, on the whole, much better employed by most men—than in showing the functions, power, and value of an art little understood; in exhibiting the perfection, desirableness, and instructiveness of all features, small or great, of external nature, and directing the public to expect and the artist to intend—an earnest and elevating *moral* influence in all that they admire and achieve.

[1] [For whom, see *Præterita*, ii. ch. i. §§ 8, 10. This letter is printed from a copy (made probably at his father's instance) now at Brantwood. It should be compared with the Letter to Dale, written in 1841, in Vol. I. p. 395.]

[2] [Gordon, as Ruskin's Diary shows, had been on a visit at Denmark Hill from Jan. 15–19.]

[3] [See Aristotle's discussion of man's peculiar work or function, in the *Ethics*, book i. ch. vii. § 10.]

[4] [As the pamphlet originally projected became a treatise, and the treatise a library, so the "two or three years" became a lifetime.]

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But you will say that I am not yet capable of doing this. Possibly not; yet I think I am quite as capable of *preaching* on the beauty of the creation, of which I know something, as of preaching on the beauty of a system of salvation of which I know nothing. If I have not power of converting men to an earnest feeling for nature, I should have still less of turning them to earnestness in religion. The one is surely a lighter task than the other; you were probably not aware that I had any such consistent and important design, and indeed at first I had not: it is from meditation on my subject only that I have seen to what it will lead me, and what I have to do. The summer before last, —it was on a Sunday, I remember, at Geneva,[1]—we got a paper from London containing a review of the Royal Academy; it put me in a rage, and that forenoon in church (it's an odd thing, but all my resolutions of which anything is to come are invariably formed, whether I will or no, in church—I scheme all thro' the litany)—that forenoon, I say, I determined to write a pamphlet and blow the critics out of the water. On Monday we went to Chamonix, and on Tuesday I got up at four in the morning, expecting to have finished my pamphlet by eight. I set to work, but the red light came on the Dome du Gouté—I couldn't sit it—and went out for a walk. Wednesday, the same thing happened, and I put off my pamphlet till I should get a wet day. The wet day didn't come—and consequently, before I began to write, I had got more materials together than were digestible in an hour or two. I put off my pamphlet till I got home. I meditated all the way down the Rhine, found that *demonstration* in matters of art was no such easy matter, and the pamphlet turned into a volume. Before the volume was half way dealt with it hydraized into three heads, and each head became a volume. Finding that nothing could be done except on such enormous scale, I determined to take the hydra by the horns, and produce a complete treatise on landscape art.

Then came the question, what is the real end of landscape art? and then the conviction that it had been entirely degraded and mistaken, that it might become an instrument of gigantic moral power, and that the demonstration of this high function, and the elevation of the careless sketch or conventional composition into the studied sermon and inspired poem, was an end worthy of my utmost labour—and of no short expenditure of life. "*Soit*," perhaps you will say, "I give you till twenty-seven to do that, and what will you do next?" Heaven knows! Something assuredly, but I must know my feelings at twenty-seven, before I can tell what. I cannot prepare for it at present, and therefore I need not know what it is to be. I shouldn't be surprised to find myself taking lay orders and going to preach, for a time at least, in Florence or Rome. One thing I shan't do, and that is preach or live in London. But I wish you would, when you have leisure, give me your opinion as to what would be my duty, and in doing so, keep in mind these following characteristics of my mind:—

First, its two great prevalent tendencies are to mystery in what it contemplates and analysis[2] in what it studies. It is externally occupied in watching vapours and splitting straws (Query, an unfavourable tendency in a sermon).

[1] [See Introduction, p. xxiii.]

[2] [See *Fors Clavigera*, Letter liv., where Ruskin refers to the "habit of fixed attention with both eyes and mind" as "the main practical faculty of my life, causing Mazzini to say of me . . . that I had 'the most analytic mind in Europe.'"]

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Secondly, it has a rooted horror of neat windows and clean walls (Query, a dangerous disposition in a village).

Thirdly, it is slightly heretical as to the possibility of anybody's being damned (Q. an immoral state of feeling in a clergyman).

Fourthly, it has an inveterate hatred of people who turn up the white of their eyes (Q. an uncharitable state of feeling towards a pious congregation).

Fifthly, it likes not the company of clowns—except in a pantomime (Q. an improper state of feeling towards country squires).

Sixthly and seventhly, it likes solitude better than company, and stones[1] better than sermons.

Take all these matters into serious consideration. You used to tell my mother, I believe, that I had more brains than the average quantity. I believe you were wrong, and that the only superiority in my make is a keen sensibility to the beauty of colour and form, and a love of that which is pure and simple. I find I forget things more than others—and more totally—that I am dull and slow in conversation—in fact, that whatever capacity I have is the result of careful training and fond love of solitary nature. I believe God gives every man certain gifts which enable him to fulfil some particular function, and I don't think my fondness for hills and streams—being, as it is, so strong in me as to amount to an instinct—was given me merely to be thwarted. I am very sorry to have written so much all about myself, but I assure you I often think of these things, and your letter gave me an opportunity of talking of them which I was glad of. At your leisure send me some of your thoughts on the matter. We are all glad to hear Miss G. is better, etc., etc.

Ever with kindest regards,

Etc., etc.

[The copy omits the signature.]

3. TO THE REV. H. G. LIDDELL[2]

October 12, 1844.

My dear Sir,—I was on the very point of writing to beg for your opinion and assistance on some matters of art, when your invaluable letter arrived. I cannot tell you how glad and grateful it makes me; glad for its encouragement, and grateful for its advice. For indeed it is not self-confidence, but

[1] [Ruskin used to say that if his natural bent in this direction had been more exclusively developed, he might have been "the first geologist of his time in Europe;" see *Præterita*, i. ch. v. § 109.]

[2] [Then Greek Reader in Christ Church; afterwards Dean. For Ruskin's friendship with him, see *Præterita*, i. ch. xi. § 230. This letter is reprinted from *Henry George Liddell: A Memoir*, by the Rev. H. L. Thompson, 1899, pp. 216–222. Liddell's letter, to which Ruskin's is a reply, is not to be found. "He seems," says Mr. Thompson, "to have commented unfavourably on the style in which the volume was got up, and to have made various suggestions as to phrases and modes of expression, and some criticisms on the main thesis of the work." In describing his undergraduate days, Ruskin says that Liddell "was the only man in Oxford among the masters of my day who knew anything of art; and his keen saying of Turner, that he 'had got

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only eagerness and strong feeling which have given so overbearing a tone to much of what I have written. I *need* some support, considering the weight and numbers of those against me; and you will, I am sure, believe me when I say that I looked to none in the whole circle of the friends whom I most respect with so much anxiety as to you: though I never ventured to hope for more than *pardon* from you for one half of the book, even if (which I little anticipated) you should take the trouble of looking over it at all. You may judge, therefore, of the infinite pleasure which your kind letter gave me: and, from the respect which you know I felt for all your opinions (even when I, in my ignorance, was little capable of understanding them, and felt most inclined to dispute them), you may judge of the deference I would yield to them now, when a little more acquaintance with high art has brought me into nearer sympathy with you. I wish there was something in your letter which I could obey without assenting to, that I might prove to you my governability. But alas! there is nothing of all the little that you say in stricture which I do not feel, and which I have not felt for some time back. In fact, on looking over the book the other day, after keeping my mind off the subject entirely for two or three months, I think I could almost have anticipated your every feeling; and I determined on the instant to take in future a totally different tone. In fact, the *Blackwood* part was put in to please some friends (especially one to whom I am much indebted for his trusting me with his drawings),[1] and the booksellers. The title-page is booksellers' work too, and was put in in defiance of my earnest wishes.[2] I let it go, for I considered myself writing for the public, not for men of taste, and I thought the booksellers knew more about the public than I. I was wrong, however, and will allow nothing of the kind in future.

But it seems to me that the pamphleteer manner is not confined to these passages: it is ingrained throughout. There is a nasty, snappish, impatient, half-familiar, half-claptrap web of young-mannishness everywhere. This was, perhaps, to be expected from the haste in which I wrote. I am going to try for better things; for a serious, quiet, earnest, and simple manner, like the execution I want in art. Forgive me for talking of myself and my intentions thus, but your advice will be so valuable to me that I know you will be glad to give it; especially as the matter I have in hand now[3] relates not more to Turner than to that pure old art which I have at last learnt (thanks to you, Acland, and Richmond) to love.

As soon as I began to throw my positions respecting the beautiful into

hold of a false ideal,' would have been infinitely helpful to me at that time, had he explained and enforced it" (*Præterita*, i. ch. xi. § 230). Many years afterwards (in 1879), Liddell, in a letter to Ruskin, thus described his first sight of *Modern Painters:* "Thirty-six years ago I was at Birmingham, examining the boys in the great school there. In a bookseller's window I saw *Modern Painters, by a Graduate of Oxford.* I knew nothing of the book, or by whom it was written. But I bought it, and read it eagerly. It was like a revelation to me, as it has been to many since. I have it by me—my children have read it; and I think with a pleasure, a somewhat melancholy pleasure, on those long past days." It was largely through Liddell's influence that Ruskin was in 1869 appointed to the Slade Professorship of Fine Art at Oxford (see Introduction to the volume containing *Lectures on Art*).]

[1] [Mr. Bicknell or Mr. Windus, see above, pp. 244, 234.]

[2] [See Introduction, p. xxxi.]

[3] [The second volume of *Modern Painters.*]

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form, I found myself necessarily thrown on the human figure for great part of my illustrations; and at last, after having held off in fear and trembling as long as I could, I saw there was no help for it, and that it must be taken up to purpose. So I am working at home from Fra Angelico, and at the British Museum from the Elgins. I passed through Paris in my return from the Alps, when I at last found myself *up* to admiration of Titian, and past Rubens (in matter of colour), and now, therefore, I think I shall do, when I have given a year or two to these pure sources. I don't think, with my heart full of Fra Angelico,[1] and my eyes of Titian, that I shall fall back into the pamphleteer style again.

Don't suppose, however, with all this, that I am going to lose Turner. On the contrary, I am more *épris* than ever, and that especially with his latest works—Goldau, etc.[2]

Monomania, you think. Possibly; nevertheless, I should not have spoken so audaciously as I have under the influence of any conviction, however strong, had I not been able to trace, in my education, some grounds for supposing that I might in deed and in truth judge more justly of him than others can. I mean, my having been taken to mountain scenery when a mere child,[3] and allowed, at a time when boys are usually learning their grammar, to ramble on the shores of Como and Lucerne; and my having since, regardless of all that usually occupies the energies of the traveller—art, antiquities, or people—devoted myself to pure, wild, solitary, natural scenery; with a most unfortunate effect, of course, as far as general or human knowledge is concerned, but with most beneficial effect on that peculiar sensibility to the beautiful in all things that God has made, which it is my present aim to render more universal. I think, too, that just as it is impossible to trace the refinements of natural form, unless with the pencil in the hand—the eye and mind never being keen enough until excited by the effort to imitate—so it is nearly impossible to observe the refinement of Turner unless one is in the habit of copying him. I began copying him when I was fourteen,[4] and so was early initiated into much which escapes even the observation of artists, whose heads are commonly too full of their own efforts and productions to give fair attention to those of others. That it was politic to give expression to all my feelings respecting Turner might well be denied, had my object in the beginning been what it is now. But I undertook, not a treatise on art or nature, but, as I thought, a small pamphlet defending a noble artist against a strong current of erring public opinion. The thing swelled under my hands, and it was not till I had finished the volume that I had any idea to what I might be led. I saw that I should have to recast the whole, some time or other; and was too impatient to do *something* to do so at once. So I let it go on as it was. The very end and aim of the whole affair was Turner; and when I let the second edition appear without alteration, it was because I found my views on many points altering and expanding so rapidly that I should never have got the thing together again until the whole of the following portions were completed. So I determined to let it alone, write

[1] [See the last words in vol. ii. of *Modern Painters*.]
[2] [For these later drawings, see above, Introduction, p. xxiii.]
[3] [See Vol. I. Introduction, p. xxv.]
[4] [Or rather thirteen, *i.e.* in 1833, when he began copying the vignettes in Rogers *Italy*; see Vol. I., Introduction, p. xxix.]

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the rest first, and then recast the whole. I think I shall have it too long by me to run the risk of flippancy of manner again, and the illustrations will render it unnecessary for me to run into caricatured description. I am going to Paris for some time, and then to Florence, before I put it finally together; chiefly to study the early Italian schools, for I want to bring the public, as far as I can, into something like a perception that religion must be, and always has been, the ground and moving spirit of all great art.[1] It puts me into a desperate rage when I hear of Eastlake's buying Guidos for the National Gallery.[2] He at least ought to know better—not that I should anticipate anything from looking at his art, but from his reputed character and knowledge.

I shall be, as you will easily conceive, no little time in getting my materials together. In fact, I have to learn half of what I am to teach. The engravers plague me sadly, and I am obliged at last to take the etching into my own hands, and this demands much time. In fact, I ought to have good ten years' work before I produce anything; but the evil is crying, and I must have at it. I hope in twelve or eighteen months to see my way to a sort of an end; and however imperfectly (owing to my narrow reading and feeble hand in *exhibiting* what I feel), I think I shall yet throw the principles of art into a higher system than ordinary writers look for: showing that the principles of beauty are the same in all things, that its characters are typical of the Deity, and of the relations which in a perfect state we are to hold with Him: and that the same great laws have authority in *all* art, and constitute it great or contemptible in their observance or violation.

And now can you tell me of any works which it is necessary I should read on a subject which has given me great trouble—the essence and operation of the imagination as it is concerned with art? Who is the best metaphysician who has treated the subject generally, and do you recollect any passages in Plato or other of the Greeks particularly bearing upon it?

Do you know Eastlake at all, or any man connected with the National Gallery? I hope you do all you can to put a stop to this buying of Guidos and Rubenses. Rubens may teach us much of mere art, but there is plenty of him in the country, and for Guido there is not even this excuse. We want Titians, we want Paul Veroneses. Our English school must have colour. Above all, we want the only man who seems to me to have united the most intense feeling with all that is great in the artist as such—John Bellini. I don't hope yet for Giotto or Fra Angelico; but if they would give us John Bellini and Titian I shouldn't grumble. I intend some time in my life to have a general conflagration of Murillos,[3] by-the-bye; I suppose more

[1] [In looking back upon his art-teaching, Ruskin said in his Oxford course—"Readings in *Modern Painters*"—that the first thing he had tried to show was "That the life of Art was in Religion." See ch. ii. of the Oxford *Lectures on Art* for his summing-up in this connection.]

[2] [Sir Charles (then Mr.) Eastlake had been appointed Keeper of the National Gallery in 1843. Among the first purchases made during his term of office were Guido's "Christ and St. John" (No. 191), "Lot and his Daughters" (No. 193), and "Susannah and the Elders" (No. 196). For a reference to the last, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. xiv. § 24. Ruskin attacked the purchase of these pictures in a letter to the *Times* (Jan. 7, 1847); see *Arrows of the Chace*, 1880, i. 64.]

[3] [See below, p. 672, and *cf.* above, p. 635 *n.*]

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corruption of taste and quenching of knowledge may be traced to him than to any man who ever touched canvas.

Pardon the villainous writing of this letter. I have been much interrupted, and have scarcely had a moment to myself, and I don't like to leave your kind one longer unanswered, or I would write rather more legibly.

Ever, my dear Sir,

Sincerely and respectfully yours,

J. RUSKIN.

4. TO THE SAME[1]

October 15, 1844.

MY DEAR LIDDELL,—You might think it affectation, were I to tell you the awkwardness with which I obey you, unless you considered the especially *childlike* position in which my good stars place me; for while many not older than I are already entrusted with the highest responsibilities that can demand or arouse the energy of manly character, I am yet as much at my ease as I was ten years ago, leading still the quiet life of mere feeling and reverie,

> "That hath no need of a remoter charm
> By thought supplied, or any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye;"[2]

and, in fact, feeling scarcely any difference in myself from the time of impositions and collections,[3] except in so far that I have discovered a great part of my time to have been lost, and made my way to a clearer view of certain ends which have been forwarded in nothing *but* vision; that I feel particularly ashamed of much that I have done, and particularly agonized about much that I have not done; that I should not now write letters of advice to Henry Acland, nor spend my time at Rome in sketching house-corners.[4] But these changes of feeling render me, if anything, less disposed to unpupil myself than I was before; and therefore I obey you, though most willingly and gratefully, yet under protest, and only because there are better means of showing respect than mere matters of form.

I could say more on this point, but I don't want to let your letter remain unanswered two days, and as I am going early into town to-morrow I must go on to some things I have to say about the points noticed in your letter. I am glad of your countenance in my opposition of studies, though I am a little afraid that such versatility of admiration—though it may make a good judge of art—makes a bad master of it. Nevertheless, for my present ends it is better it should be so. But though I can turn, and am glad to be able to turn,

[1] [Reprinted from Mr. Thompson's *Memoir*, pp. 222–228. To the preceding letter "Liddell seems to have written a long reply, and at the close to have desired his correspondent to drop for the future the formal style of address, and to call him simply by his surname."]

[2] [Wordsworth: *Tintern Abbey*.]

[3] [For this Oxford term (College examinations), see *Præterita*, i. ch. xi. § 220.]

[4] [As, *e.g.*, in the Piazza del Pianto; see Vol. I. pl. 15 and p. lvii.]

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to the most opposed sources of thought and characters of beauty, surely we ought to demand in each kind the perfect and the best examples. The world is so old, that there is no dearth of things first-rate; and life so short, that there is no excuse for looking at things second-rate. Let us then go to Rubens for blending, and to Titian for quality, of colour; to Cagliari for daylight, and Rembrandt for lamplight; to Buonarotti for awfulness, and to Van Huysum[1] for precision. Each of their excellences has its use and order, and reference to certain modes and periods of thought, each its right place and proper dignity, incompatible. Any man is worthy of respect in his own rank, who has pursued any truth or attainment with all his heart and strength. But I dread and despise the artists who are respectable in many things, and have been excelled by *some one* in everything. They are surely the more dangerous; for mediocrity in much is more comprehensible and attractive than the superiority in singleness, which has abandoned much to gain one end. Murillo seems to me a peculiar instance of this. His drawing is free and not ungraceful, but most imperfect, and slurred to gain a melting quality of colour. That colour is agreeable because it has no force nor severity; but it is morbid, sunless, and untrue. His expression is sweet, but shallow; his models amiable, but vulgar and mindless; his chiaroscuro commonplace, opaque, and conventional: and yet all this so agreeably combined, and animated by a species of waxwork life, that it is sure to catch everybody who has not either very high feeling or strong love of truth, and to keep them from obtaining either. He sketched well from a model, and now and then a single figure is very fine. He was not a *bad* painter, but he exercises a most fatal influence on the English school, and therefore I owe him an especial grudge. I have never entered the Dulwich Gallery for fourteen years without seeing at least three copyists before the Murillos. I *never* have seen *one* before the Paul Veronese.

Next, with respect to Turner. I hope we are not opposed so much as you think. You know all my praise relates to his fidelity to, and love of, nature; it does not affirm in him the highest degree of solemnity, or of purity, in feeling or choice; and there is one circumstance which it seems to me has great influence on the minds of most men of feeling with respect to the works of the old masters as compared with him. On this subject—the creation of *pure* light and the sacrifice of everything to that end—I shall have much to say which (if it has not already occurred to you,—as it is most probable it should) will be more pleasantly read in print than in these hieroglyphics. Putting, however, this great source of power out of the question (and how much is involved in it I am not prepared to say), Turner will still appear rather in the light of a man of great power, drawing good indiscriminately, and therefore necessarily in very different kinds and degrees, out of everything, than

[1] [In his 1844 Diary (August), among notes on the Louvre, is the following on No. 505 (but the numbers have since been changed; it is a landscape):—

> "A landscape by Van Huysum, who seems to me the most delicate of the Dutch painters, in which individual leaves of trees and foreground are given or attempted, and the futility of the effort shown by the entire spottiness and pettiness of all the near objects, though the nearest, especially the details of leafage on the right, are delightful from their delicacy and precision, being there in their place. The man has fine feeling; the distance is rich, glowing, and full of Italian dignity, and his knowledge of details is here useful to him, from his being at once compelled and able, to avoid them or analyze and generalize them."]

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of one devoting his energies to the full development of any particular moral emotion. He is rather the philosopher who perceives and equally exhibits all, than the ardent lover who raises some peculiar object by all the glories of imagination and with all the powers of his heart. His *powers* I think you never denied; at least when I first showed you my "Winchelsea" with the troop of soldiers at Oxford[1] you said, "Yes, just like him, what no one else could do, but—" I am not quite sure what the particular "but" was; whatever it was, the *powers* were admitted. These powers then seemed employed with a versatility which gives a result in art very much like what *Don Juan* is in literature, in everything but its want of moral feeling; a result containing passages and truths of every character, the most exquisite tenderness, the most gigantic power, the most playful familiarity, the most keen philosophy and overwhelming passion; and yet the whole will not produce on most men's minds the effect of a great poem. It does on mine; but certainly not to the degree which it might perhaps have done had there been less power and more unity. But it is great in its kind, and there is a system in both the art and the poem which may be reasoned out, and a great whole arrived at by reflection, as out of the chaos of human life and circumstances of its Providence. You must have felt this, I think, in looking over the "Liber Studiorum," in which you pass from the waste of English lonely moorland with the gallows-tree ghastly against the dying twilight, to the thick leaves and dreamy winds of the Italian woods; from a study of cocks and hens scratching on a dunghill to the cold, slow colossal coil of the Jason serpent; from the sport of children about a willowy pond to the agony of Rizpah.[2]

Turner, as far as I can ascertain anything of his past life, is a man of inferior birth and no education, arising at a time when there were no masters to guide him to great ends, and by the necessity and closeness of his study of nature withdrawn from strong human interests; endowed with singular delicacy of perception and singular tenderness of heart, but both associated with quick temper and most determined obstinacy, acting constantly under momentary impulses, but following out inflexibly whatever he has begun. Considering the little feeling for high art which, till within the last ten years, existed in this country, and the absence of sympathy with him in all but what he felt himself was the mere repetition of things bygone, and which could not be bettered, we cannot but expect that there should be something to regret in his career, and something wanting to his attainments; and we must be content to receive the great and new lessons which he has read to us out of the material world, without quarrelling with the pettinesses and inconsistencies, perhaps unavoidable unless where art is the minister to vast national sympathies and the handmaid of religion.

I had much more to say, but my time is gone. I will attend to all you advise respecting the next book. I have not spoken about your kind defence of the present one, but cannot now. I think I shall be pretty sure not to use the language of any particular Church, for I don't know exactly which one I belong to. A Romanist priest, after a long talk under a tree in a shower at St. Martin's, assured me I was quite as good a Catholic as he. However, the religious language I shall use in what references I may have to make will

[1] [The drawing was given to Ruskin by his father on his twenty-first birthday at Oxford: see *Præterita*, ii. ch. i. § 13.]

[2] [Cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi.]

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be simply that of the Bible;[1] and a few allusions to the doctrine of the Trinity and the general attributes of the Deity will be all I shall require. Thank you much for your reference to Vaughan about imagination, etc. Thank you also for your careful notes of the *errata* in the old book, which I shall take care to alter.

If the only and single result of my labour had been that which you mention, some rest to your mind in a period of pain, it would have been enough reward for me, even without the privilege which the close of your letter allows me, of continuing,

My dear Liddell,

Very truly and gratefully yours,

J. Ruskin.

5. TO THE SAME[2]

My dear Liddell,—I forgot when I last wrote, to speak of Greswell's paper respecting Art professorships—several people have been talking to me on the subject—everybody says *some*thing should be done—and nobody says what. Is any combined effort being made at Oxford—any petition to be signed or measure taken which I can any way forward—as of course I should be most desirous so to do. Greswell's paper[3] is very valuable and interesting—and I wish it had been a little expanded and generally circulated—more especially that he had dwelt more distinctly on the relations of Art to Religion—as—under this point of view—I conceive he might have brought his measures forward not merely as expedient or desirable—but even as a matter of duty in no light degree encumbent on the members of the University. There appears to me but one obstacle in your way—you may get your pictures—your gallery—your

[1] [Every reader will be struck by the number of Bible words and phrases in Ruskin's books. It is partly in order to call attention to this point that the editors supply, no doubt otherwise superfluously, the references as they occur. See also *The Bible References of John Ruskin, by Mary and Ellen Gibbs* (George Allen: 1898).]

[2] [Not hitherto published; printed by permission of Mrs. Liddell from the original among the papers of the late Dean. One or two words in it are not very legible. It is interesting to have Ruskin's remarks on the difficulty of filling a post which he was called on to "create" in 1870.]

[3] [Richard Greswell (1800–1881), fellow and tutor of Worcester College, Oxford; opened a subscription on behalf of National Education in 1843 with a donation of £1000; one of the founders of the Museum and Ashmolean Society, Oxford. The paper referred to is *On Education in the Principles of Art: a Paper read before the Members of the Ashmolean Society*, by the Rev. Richard Greswell, B.D.: Oxford, 1844. He called attention to the absence of works in English on the philosophy of art, and continues: "It is with a view to the supplying of this positive and notorious defect in our system of education, and as a salutary check upon that exclusive preference of the useful, as distinguished from the ornamental, and, particularly, upon that almost idolatrous love of money, which is becoming, every day, more and more characteristic of the English nation,—that I think it desirable that three Professorships of the Theory of Art (and especially of Christian art) should be founded by Royal Authority, one in London . . . and the other two at Oxford and at Cambridge." What he urged was done, twenty-six years later, by the munificence of Felix Slade, and Ruskin, the first Slade Professor at Oxford, certainly discharged the duties of the office in the spirit recommended by Greswell.]

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authority—and your thirty thousand pounds—but what will you do for a *Professor?* Where can you lay finger on the man who has at once the artistical power to direct your taste in matters technical—and the high feeling and scholarship necessary to show the end of the whole matter? There is—strictly speaking—not a man in England who can colour—except Etty—and even he not securely [?]; and I don't like the idea of a professor of painting with no eye for colour. Eastlake would, I suppose, be the man generally thought of. A gentleman and a scholar he may be—a man of some feeling too—of more than the generality of R.A.'s—but, it seems to me, thoroughly shallow with a tinge [?] of the Annual and drawing-room—(witness Heloise's velvet sleeves)—his types of the human face are of low standard—he draws poorly—and cannot colour at all.[1] I don't mean to say that a man may not be able to teach without being able to realise what he desires—but in the works of every man from whose teaching I should hope effect—I should expect a fire—energy—and aim at the right—however failing or shortcoming—not a polite or agreeable mediocrity. Mulready is a better artist than Eastlake, but I know not his attainments in literature—nor his tone of feeling. I should fear a tendency Dutchward in him. Redgrave's delicate domesticity would hardly make much of the drawings of Michael Angelo. Whom else can you name—Not, I presume, Howard—nor Sir Martin—nor Maclise?[2]

I daresay you thought my last letter about Turner very confused from my not distinguishing between single pictures (as poems in themselves) and the mass of his works. But the fact is I am much in the habit of considering his pictures in their relations to each other—as a body of writing—rather than as separate works[3]—and what I said of them as a mass will apply to the greater portion of them individually. But it is always unfair to look at them individually—because—especially in such works as the England and Wales—every one of them has a certain part to play and story to tell and gap to fill with reference to the rest; and on several of the subjects in that work being objected to—as uninteresting—and others—*similar* to those more *agreeable* being requested—he said at once—No, this I have *done, that* I have not done, I will *repeat* nothing and I will omit nothing.

So that his aim is in fact as much historical as imaginative—historical of all facts and phases of nature—and he becomes fully impressive and powerful only so often as nature does so herself, endeavouring, however, always, whatever he deals with, to treat in a *great* manner—though not always in a poetical one.

Hence also he will not perhaps exercise so much power over the imagination as an inferior artist might—with another system. For it seems to me that one great secret in awakening the imaginative faculties is to present to it features in some respect resembling what it would have coined out for itself—

[1] [For another reference to Eastlake, see preceding letter, p. 670; for a later, *Academy Notes*, 1855, *s.* No. 120. In 1848 Ruskin reviewed Eastlake's *Materials for a History of Oil Painting in the Quarterly* (reprinted in *On the Old Road*, 1885 and 1899, vol. i.). "Heloise" was Eastlake's picture, No. 48, in the Academy of 1844.]

[2] [For Mulready, see *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., Addenda and Epilogue. For Redgrave, *Academy Notes*, 1855, *s.* No. 240. Henry Howard, R.A. (1769–1847), was at this time Professor of Painting in the Royal Academy; Sir Martin Shee, its President. For Maclise, see above, p. 51.]

[3] [See *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. xi. § 30, where Ruskin gives Turner's saying, "What is the use of them, but together?"]

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if spontaneously exciting. But not to present much matter of new and direct *information*, otherwise the intellect is set to work—and the imagination overpowered. Now, most people's imaginations are full of ideas which however *elegant*, are crude and wrong in many respects—and when we correct these by presenting to them refined truth, we do not supply excitement to the mind as it *is*, but we try to change it and give it new ideas, an operation in some degree painful and requiring effort. So that when—as Perugino would—we set the imagination to work by presenting to it a type of tree like this,[1] we do so far more effectually and nobly than if we gave to our type all the imperfection with which the mind is *unacquainted*, and so instead of rousing the creative faculty—such as it is—with its own materials, demanded the attention of the intellectual faculties to give it new ones. Hence the merit and *necessity* of the rigid manner of the backgrounds of these glorious old works, in which we find *refinement* of the highest order, realising what the imagination would naturally suggest, but no effort at teaching or informing. I have worked out this subject pretty fully, and if I do not change my mind with respect to it, I shall hope to have your opinion respecting it when presented in more legible form—meantime I merely mention it as one of the reasons which prevent great modern works from having the same effect as the old—for the modern are full of information—crowded with facts entirely unknown to the observer—types with which his imagination has never been familiarised, and which therefore have no effect whatever by association, or any other of those delicately toned cords by which more familiar nature is bound to the heart—hence they excite the passions little and have no historical effect;—no carrying back into past time—they are the world as it was and is, not our *ideas* of things past away—and they appeal only to the sense of pure—inherent beauty, a sense nearly, if not altogether, wanting in many men.

The art of the Intellect and of the heart must thus be in some degree opposed—but I think I see my way to a partial reconcilement of them in the ideal at which I am aiming, remembering always that there *is* a beauty which may make *thought* impossible, which may fill the soul with an intense—changeless *θεωρία*.[2]

Of course none of these circumstances in any degree justify the landscape painters for their specific errors and imperfections, but they may, I imagine, account for much of what is impressive in them in spite of such errors. The backgrounds of the great religionists have the science of the naturalist and the quaintness of the imagination together. *They* are the people to be looked to—only the more knowledge we put into the spectator—the less quaintness we require, at least so it seems to me—but I beg your pardon for all this, which I merely go through that you may know exactly how far I am disposed to go—with modern art—and so tell me where you think I am wrong.

Yours ever most sincerely,

J. Ruskin.

[1] [A rough sketch of a feathery tree, in the style of Perugino, is here given in the original.]

[2] [See *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. ii. § i., and cf. *Letters to a College Friend*, in Vol. I., p. 425.]

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IV

PREFACES TO SELECTIONS FROM "MODERN PAINTERS"

1. FRONDES AGRESTES[1]

(1875)

I HAVE been often asked to republish the first book of mine which the public noticed, and which, hitherto, remains their favourite, in a more easily attainable form than that of its existing editions. I am, however, resolved never to republish the book as a whole; some parts of it being, by the established fame of Turner, rendered unnecessary; and others having been always useless, in their praise of excellence which the public will never give the labour necessary to discern. But, finding lately that one of my dearest friends, who, in advanced age, retains the cheerfulness and easily delighted temper of bright youth, had written out, for her own pleasure, a large number of passages from *Modern Painters*, it seemed to me certain that what such a person felt to be useful to herself, could not but be useful also to a class of readers whom I much desired to please, and who would sometimes enjoy, in my early writings, what I never should myself have offered them. I asked my friend, therefore, to add to her own already chosen series, any other passages she thought likely to be of permanent interest to general readers; and I have printed her selections in absolute submission to her judgment, merely arranging the pieces she sent me in the order which seemed most convenient for the reciprocal bearing of their fragmentary meanings, and adding here and there an explanatory note; or, it may be, a deprecatory one, in cases where my mind had changed. That she did me the grace to write every word with her own hands, adds, in my eyes, and will, I trust, in the readers' also, to the possible claims of the little book on their sympathy; and although I hope to publish some of the scientific and technical portions of the original volumes in my own large editions, the selections here made by my friend under her quiet woods at Coniston—the Unter-Walden of England—will, I doubt not, bring within better reach of many readers, for whom I am not now able myself to judge or choose, such service as the book was ever capable of rendering, in the illustration of the powers of nature, and intercession for her now too often despised and broken peace.

HERNE HILL,
5th December, 1874.

[1] [See above, Introduction, p. xlviii., and Bibliographical Note, p. lxi.]

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2. IN MONTIBUS SANCTIS[1]

(1884)

I RECEIVE at present with increasing frequency requests or counsels from people whose wishes and advice I respect, for the reprinting of *Modern Painters*. When I formerly stated my determination not to republish that work in its original form,[2] it was always with the purpose of giving its scientific sections, with further illustration, in *Deucalion* and *Proserpina*, and extracts from those relating to art and education in my Oxford Lectures.[3] But finding, usually, for these last, subjects more immediately interesting; and seeing that Deucalion and Proserpina have quite enough to do in their own way—for the time they have any chance of doing it in—I am indeed minded now to reprint the three scientific sections of *Modern Painters* in their original terms, which, very thankfully I find, cannot much be bettered, for what they intend or attempt. The scientific portions, divided prospectively, in the first volume, into four sections, were meant to define the essential forms of sky, earth, water, and vegetation: but finding that I had not the mathematical knowledge required for the analysis of wave-action, the chapters on Sea-painting were never finished, the materials for them being partly used in the *Harbours of England*, and the rest of the design remitted till I could learn more dynamics. But it was never abandoned, and the corrections already given in *Deucalion* of the errors of Agassiz and Tyndall on the glacier theory, are based on studies of wave-motion which I hope still to complete the detail of in that work.

My reprints from *Modern Painters* will therefore fall only into three divisions, on the origin of form in clouds, mountains, and trees. They will be given in the pages and type now chosen for my Oxford Lectures;[4] and the two lectures on existing Storm-cloud already published will form a proper introduction to the cloud-studies of former times, of which the first number is already in the press. In like manner, the following paper,[5] prepared to be read before the Mineralogical Society on the occasion of their meeting in Edinburgh this year, and proposing, in brief abstract, the questions which are at the root of rock-science, may not unfitly introduce the chapters of geological enquiry, begun at the foot of the Matterhorn thirty years ago,[6]

[1] [See above, Introduction, p. xlix., and Bibliographical Note, p. lxii.]

[2] [In the Preface to the edition of 1873; see above, p. 54.]

[3] [In 1875 Ruskin gave a course on "The *Discourses* of Sir Joshua Reynolds," and in 1877 on "Readings in *Modern Painters*." Both these courses were in some measure résumés of that work. Most of his other courses broke new ground; and on resuming the professorship in 1883, he again lectured on fresh topics—"The Art of England," and "The Pleasures of England."]

[4] [*i.e.* the form in which *The Art of England* (1884) and (afterwards) *The Pleasures of England* (1884–85) were originally published, small quarto and Caslon *o.f.* type. Ruskin used to have the lectures set up in advance, and read them (in part) from the print which (as he used to say) had then to be large to suit his old eyes. The lectures on "The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century," delivered at the London Institution in February 1884, were similarly printed and published.]

[5] [Printed in a later volume of this edition; read (not by Ruskin himself) before the Mineralogical Society, July 24, 1884.]

[6] [The reference is to the chapters on the Matterhorn in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* (written in 1854–56). Ruskin, however, began his studies "at the foot of the Matterhorn" at an earlier date, viz. in 1849.]

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enquiries which were the proper sequel of those instituted by Saussure, and from which the fury of investigation in extinct zoology has since so far diverted the attention of mineralogists, that I have been virtually left to pursue them alone; not without some results, for which, fortified as they are by the recent advance of rock-chemistry, I might claim, did I care to claim, the dignity of Discoveries. For the separate enumeration of these, the reader is referred to the postscript to the opening paper.[1]

The original woodcuts will all be used in this edition, but in order not to add to the expense of the republished text, I have thought it best that such of the steel plates as are still in a state to give fair impressions, should be printed and bound apart; purchaseable either collectively or in separate parts, illustrative of the three several sections of text. These will be advertised when ready.[2]

The text of the old book, as in the already reprinted second volume,[3] will be in nothing changed, and only occasionally explained or amplified by notes in brackets.

It is also probable that a volume especially devoted to the subject of Education may be composed of passages gathered out of the entire series of my works; and since the parts of *Modern Painters* bearing on the principles of art will be incorporated in the school lectures connected with my duty at Oxford, whatever is worth preservation in the whole book will be thus placed at the command of the public.

BRANTWOOD,
16th September, 1884.

[1] [On these points, see Vol. VI.]

[2] [This scheme was never carried out. It is possible that some of the additional plates, referred to above (p. liii.), were intended for inclusion in this projected separate publication. The volume on Education was not done, either; see above, Introduction, p. l. *n.*]

[3] [The separate edition of that volume, issued in 1883; see Vol. IV.]

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V

THE MSS. OF "MODERN PAINTERS" VOL. I

THE MSS. of portions of this volume, to which the editors have had access, and which (so far as they are aware) are alone extant, are as follow:—

(I.) The Brantwood MS. contained in the second of the two MS. books of *The Poetry of Architecture*. The *Modern Painters* MSS. occupy sixty to seventy pages of this book, and consist of two drafts, (*a*) and (*b*)—probably the earliest made by the author—of this volume as first designed by him.

(*a*) The first draft of all proceeds only a very short way. The following is the text of it:—

> "The ends of all landscape painting are, properly speaking, two. The first, to set before the spectator a true and accurate representation of objects. The second, to convey into the mind of the spectator the peculiar impression those objects made on the mind of the painter himself. Artists, as they aim at one or other of these ends, may be divided into the painters of facts, and the painters of emotion—two great classes, to one or other of which all landscape painters may be referred.
>
> "The painters of facts have again two distinct ends. The one, to delight by accuracy of imitation; the other, to delight by the beauty of the represented objects. Both these ends are usually, in some degree, aimed at in the same picture; but those artists who excel most in imitation are apt to select only such subjects as may best display their power, and gradually to lose all sense and desire of intrinsic beauty, or any other desirable attribute, in the subject itself. While the painters of beauty, assisting the natural attractions of their subject by all the expedients of art, verge gradually in aim upon the painters of emotion.
>
> "Of the purely imitative aim and manner, we may adduce as examples the pot and kettle part of the Dutch school; the minute labour of Gerard Dow and Ostade, to reach the perfect lustre of brass-pans and particular scarlet of ripe carrots; the inconceivable consumption of sight and time upon the chiselling (not merely the decoration, but even the rough traces of the stone-mason's mallet) in the stone tablets with which they often support the elbows of their Dutch beauties;—and, in higher art, the laboured tears of Carlo Dolci's Mater Dolorosas; the rustling damasks of Paul Veronese; the separate hairs and glancing

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jewels of some of the heads of Rembrandt; and—last, but not least—certain hats and sticks, kid gloves and satin slippers, on which our own Landseer has lately spent as much labour as, had it been applied as it is in the Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner, might have touched the hearts of half the world.

"In all these cases, be it observed, it is not his subject which the artist wishes to display, his only endeavour to please is by the manifestation of his own power of simple imitation. We are not intended to do obeisance to raw carrots, nor to be overpowered with a sense of sublimity in the extended orbit of a frying-pan; nor had Landseer any tyrannical and worse than Gessler-like intention of making the world bow before not even the presence, but the effigy of Prince Albert's hat. In all cases we are expected to derive pleasure and bestow praise as we perceive the perfection of mere imitation. And the pleasure is felt and praise given by no small portion of the world, and in no small degree. I do not mean merely by the uneducated and childish, not merely by the great portion of the public who chase flies, dewdrops, lace and satin through an exhibition; but by many who call themselves connoisseurs, who exclaim at a figure as its greatest praise, that it seems to be coming out of the canvas, and measure the merit of a Crucifixion by the corpse colour of the wounded flesh.

"Nor do I deny that some of this praise is deserved by the imitative painter. Great industry, long practice, and perfect knowledge of all that is mechanical, of all that can be really taught, in art, are necessary to his success. And as a mechanic, as a clever workman, he is deserving of high praise,—of the same kind of praise which we bestow on a tapestry-worker or a turner, or any kind of artificer who is ready and dextrous with both eyes and fingers, but of no other kind, and of no more praise than these."

(*b*) Here the first draft (*a*) ends, and the essay is begun again, from a somewhat different point of departure, in draft (*b*). Chapter I. of this, after a short exordium on imitation in art, makes the following initial classification of the subject—namely, the two great ends of landscape painting, (1) the representation of facts, (2) of thoughts. This is the distinction afterwards drawn in pt. ii. sec. i. ch. i.; the draft has the passage there given about the artist as the spectator's "conveyance, not companion; horse, not friend" (see above, p. 133 *n.*), and the rest of the chapter closely follows the chapter just mentioned, having, however, an additional paragraph at the end which shows the comparatively modest proportions on which *Modern Painters* was then designed:—

"In the second part of the work I shall endeavour, as far as I think I understand them, to explain the qualities and powers of his [Turner's] mind, and to institute such a comparison as the subject admits of between these and the faculties of the men who have until now been considered the Fathers of Landscape Art."

Chapter II. in the draft (of which chapter there are two versions) is substantially the same as chapter ii. in the text.

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Chapter III. ("Of the Relative Importance of Truths") is a first draft from which chapters iii.–iv. in the text were afterwards expanded.

Two following passages in the MS. are missing, having been cut out. They must have contained the beginning of chapter iv., which similarly is a draft from which sec. ii. chs. i.–iii. were expanded, dealing with Truth of Tone, Truth of Colour, and Truth of Chiaroscuro severally. One passage in the draft is of special interest as recording an effect noted in one of Ruskin's diaries (see note on p. 271, above).

Chapter v. in the draft was similarly expanded into sec. ii. chs. iv. and v. Here this draft ends.

(II.) The Allen (now Morgan) MSS. consisting of a MS. book—one of a series numbered by Ruskin. The one with which we are here concerned (No. 14A) includes, besides portions of *Modern Painters*, vol. i., various notes of Architectural Details; a translation of some of the Epistle to the Romans, with comments (see above, p. xxix.), and various data for *The Stones of Venice*. This volume, with many others of a like kind, was given by Ruskin to Mr. George Allen in May 1885; it has recently been sold by him (together with all the other *Modern Painters* MSS. in his possession) to Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. This MS. of vol. i. represents a later stage of the book than drafts (*a*) and (*b*) described above, corresponding more nearly to its final form. It contains:—The Synopsis of Contents (pp. 55–75 of this edition), and portions of the following: Part I. sec. i. chs. ii. iii. iv. v. vi. and vii.; sec. ii. chs. i. ii. and iii. Part II. sec. i. ch. vii.; sec. ii. ch. iii. The MS. of the Synopsis of Contents must be of later date than the rest.

Passages from these Allen MSS. have already been given in footnotes to the text. Of the close revision of words and phrases, which a study of the MSS. discloses, some illustrative samples have also been given already. Further citations are unnecessary here, for the other variations are for the most part more of arrangement than of substance.

Speaking generally, we may say that there is no MS. of the volume in its final, or even penultimate form. Nor is there any MS. at all of the Prefaces, the Introductory chapter, and of the greater portion of Part II.

In addition to the MSS., the editors have had access, as already mentioned (p. xlvii.), to two printed copies of the volume which Ruskin kept by him for revision, and in which he made various notes, corrections, and memoranda. One of these copies—once his father's, who has marked it for selections—is of the third edition (1846). Ruskin's notes in it are much later; probably after 1870, certainly after 1860. The other copy (ed. 1867) was used by him when proposing to rearrange the volume. Many of the author's notes, contained in one or other of these copies, have already been cited in footnotes to the text. His scheme of rearrangement was as follows:—

The Introductory chapter (pt. i. sec. i. ch. i.) stood as it was, with some excisions (see notes on pp. 80, 83, 84, 85). The next chapter ("Definition of Greatness in Art") was rechristened "Definition of the General Subject," and had § 1 of the following chapter added to it. Chapter iii. was entitled "Extended Definitions of the Ideas Conveyable by Art," and contained chs. iii.–vii. (as they stand in the text, but considerably curtailed).

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After this "General Introduction" in three chapters, Ruskin went on to chapter iv., which he entitled "General Principles: 1. Of Ideas of Power, 2. Of Ideas of Imitation." This included chs. i. and ii. of sec. ii. as they now stand, though again considerably curtailed, and was intended to include also a good deal else, for at the end of the present chapter ii. (see p. 127), Ruskin notes, "Add passage about lusciousness and delight, p. 7," and "Now to p. 179 of vol. v."; that is to say, he meant to add a passage containing some of the points made on our p. 87, and to work in, at the end of the revised chapter here, the chapter in the fifth volume on the grand style in painting (entitled "The Rule of the Greatest"), that being a topic clearly connected with Ideas of Power. Chapter iii. in vol. i. (pt. i. sec. ii.), "Of the Sublime," thus became superfluous, and was deleted, with the exception of the three last sentences (see p. 130), which formed the connection between the revised ch. iv. of Part I. and the following Part II.

Part II. Section I., "General Principles respecting Ideas of Truth," remained unaltered (except for a few minor excisions and corrections, already noted).

Part II. Section II., "Of General Truths," was to be rearranged. Chapter i., "Of Truth of Tone," was left as it stood; but chapter ii., "Of Truth of Colour," was to be given "with chapter iii. of vol. iv." ("Of Turnerian Light"). Chapter iii., "Of Truth of Chiaroscuro," was to be omitted, for it is headed in Ruskin's copy "Not this," and chapter iv., "Of Truth of Space:—First, as dependent on the focus of the eye," chapter v., "Of Truth of Space:—Secondly, as its appearance is dependent on the power of the eye," was to be given "with chs. iv. and v. of vol. iv." ("Of Turnerian Mystery:—First, as Essential," and "Of Turnerian Mystery:—Secondly, Wilful"). It will thus be seen that this section was to be altogether recast; chs. ii. § v. being incorporated, in some rearranged form, with chs. iii. iv. and v. of vol. iv.

Beyond this point Ruskin's markings for his proposed rearrangement do not extend.

It only remains to add that on the fly-leaf of one of his copies Ruskin has written the following memoranda:—

French Preface.

1. Writing not what I thought—all—but only what was necessary at particular times.
2. Writing too soon.
3. ——— in necessary passion and vexation.
4. With Landscape idiosyncracy.
5. Forgetting to give due importance to Harmony.
6. My own labour. Explain plate of Raphael. Purism.

It does not appear what "French Preface" means. The clue is probably to be found in the letters of Ruskin to Monsieur E. Chesneau of Feb. 1 and Feb. 13, 1867,[1] from which it appears that M. Chesneau had some intention of publishing a volume of selections from Ruskin's works translated into French.

[1] Nos. 1 and 2 in the privately printed volume of *Letters from John Ruskin to Ernest Chesneau* (1894); included in a later volume of this edition.

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In the letters referred to, Ruskin rather discountenances the idea "at present," laying stress on "many imperfect statements and reasonings" in his art-writings which he had yet to complete and correct. Presumably Ruskin jotted down the heads of an explanatory preface which for a time he thought of writing to such a book as M. Chesneau proposed. He would have explained that his various volumes were written to meet particular needs, and that he had not in any one of them expressed all his thoughts; that he had begun to write *Modern Painters* at an early age, before his studies were completed or his opinions on all points fixed; that much of his work was a passionate protest against ideas, criticisms, or tendencies that had excited his anger; that his own art-preferences and studies were at first (and in some degree, always) turned towards landscape; and that he had not in his first volume given due importance to harmony in composition. Lastly, he would have dwelt upon the labour that he had devoted, over so many years, to the preparation of *Modern Painters*. Whenever in that book, a plate is described by Ruskin as "after" such and such a master, he had always himself made the drawing for the engraver from the original picture. The plate entitled "Latest Purism" (No. 11 in vol. iii. of the book), after Raphael, is a case in point.

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VI

MINOR "VARIÆ LECTIONES"

All the more important and substantial variations between the various editions of *Modern Painters*, vol. i., have already been given in footnotes to the text, or at the end of chapters. For the sake of completeness, the remaining variations are here given. A few quite obvious misprints, however—in mere matters of spelling—are not enumerated.

Preface to Second Edition, § 2, line 12, for "still" ed. 2 reads "yet"; § 17, line 3, for "spicula" eds. 2 and 3 read "spiculæ"; § 24, line 2, "*In* many arts" was misprinted "*Its*" in 1873 ed.; § 31, line 8, for "with" eds. 2, 3, and 4 read "for"; § 38, line 27, for "Anio" ed. 2 reads "Arno"; § 40 *n*, line 6, for "for" eds. 2, 3, and 4 read "of"; § 45, line 12, for "would" eds. 2, 3, and 4 read "had"; § 46, the last three words were printed with capitals in ed. 2, thus "What They Are."

Synopsis of Contents.—Part I. sec. i. ch. iii. § 3, "The meaning of the word 'excellence'" omitted in ed. 2. Part II. sec. i. ch. ii. § 8, "Compare part i. sec. i. ch. iv." omitted in ed. 2. Ch. vii. § 1, for "the several aims at" ed. 2 reads "the aim at"; § 3, for "gave" ed. 2 reads "give." The rest of the contents of this chapter as printed do not appear in eds. 1 and 2, which read instead, "§ 6. And with the feeling of modern artists. § 7. The character of Venice as given by Canaletti. § 8. By Prout. § 9. By Stanfield. § 10. By Turner. § 11. The system to be observed in comparing works with reference to truth. § 12 (ed. 2). Difficulty of demonstration in such subjects. § 13. General plan of investigation."

Similarly in other chapters, where the contents were different in eds. 1 and 2, the synopsis differed; the marginal notes, repeated in the synopsis of those eds., have already been given in footnotes to the several chapters. The following are other variations in the synopsis:—

Sec. ii. ch. v. § 14, for "Canaletto" eds. 1 and 2 read "Canaletti." (So throughout the volume, eds. 1 and 2 spell Canaletti—see note in Vol. I., p. 223—Orgagna, Canvass. "Graduations" for "gradations" is another early peculiarity of the Oxford Graduate.)

Sec. iii. ch. iv. § 3, for "And indefiniteness . . ." eds. 3 and 4 read (wrongly) "And in definiteness." § 7, after "in this respect," ed. 2 adds "Works of Stanfield." § 16, before "Swift rain-cloud in the Coventry," eds. 2 and 3 read, "Deep-studied form of . . ."

Sec. iv. ch. iii. § 10, for "Effects of external influence" ed. 2 reads "Effects of external nature . . ."

Sec. v. ch. i. § 6, for "General laws" ed. 2 reads "rules," and for "the imperfection of its reflective surface," "its universality of reflection."

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Sec. vi. ch. i. § 25, after the line as it stands, ed. 2 inserts "Their ideal form." Ch. ii. § 6, for "his last works" eds. 2 and 3 read "his present works." Ch. iii. § 23, for "aim" ed. 1 reads "system."

Text.—Part i. sec. i. ch. iv. § 1, lines 20, 21, eds. 1 and 2 omit "In which case." Sec. ii. ch. ii. § 9, line 9, for "good" eds. 1 and 2 read "fine."

Part ii. sec. i. ch. ii. § 2, line 18, eds. 1–5 and 1873 read in the quotation from Locke "it not reaching," and so in some eds. of the original; other eds. of Locke, and ed. of 1888 (*Modern Painters*), read "if not reaching," as in the text of this ed.; in the preceding line, eds. 1–5 and 1873 read incorrectly "ideas" instead of "idea." § 8 (marginal note), eds. 1 and 2 omit reference to "Part i. sec. i. ch. iv."

Ch. iv. § 1, line 15, the reference was erroneously given to "Chap. V." in ed. of 1873.

Ch. v. § 1, line 11, "no" misprinted "not" in 1873 ed.

Ch. vi. § 2, line 1, "*as* truths" misprinted "*are* truths" in 1873 ed.; § 3, line 9, the reference was erroneously given to "Sec. II." in 1873 ed.

Ch. vii. § 11, the reference here given (p. 181) to sec. and ch. was in previous eds. given to the page; there are other similar variations elsewhere. § 37, for "Nicole Pisano" ed. 3 read "Nino"; line 6 from end, for "these very times" eds. 3 and 4 read "this year 1846." § 42, "Proserpine" misprinted "Prosperine" in ed. 3 (see above, p. lii. *n*). § 43, line 3, "Rogers's Poems" (so in all previous eds.) should be "poems" as the reference is to the *Italy* as well as to the *Poems*. § 44, lines 1 and 2, "*paintings*" and "*drawings*" were not italicised in eds. 3 and 4.

Part ii. sec. ii. ch. i. § 12, line 1, for "Chap. v. of the next section" ed. of 1873 reads "Chap. vi. of this section"; line 15, for "1842" eds. 1 and 2 read "last year's exhibition."

Ch. ii. § 5, line 16, for "can it be seriously supposed" eds. 1 and 2 read "can you seriously suppose." § 6, line 15, for "nearer" eds. 1–4 read "nearest." § 11, line 14, before "fond" eds. 1 and 2 insert "exceedingly."

Ch. iv. § 1, line 14, "effects" misprinted "efforts" in ed. of 1873; § 6, line 7, eds. 2 and 3 omit "observe."

Ch. v. § 6, line 8, for "us," eds. 1 and 2 read "you."

Ch. v. § 10, last line but 4, eds. 2–4 read "*anything*."

Part ii. sec. iii. ch. i. § 1, in the quotation from Wordsworth, "too bright *or* good" was misprinted "*nor*" in eds. 1–5 and 1873. § 15, in the quotation from Wordsworth, eds. 1 and 2 italicised the word "suddenly" only. § 20 (marginal note), eds. 1–4 italicised the word "quality."

Ch. ii. § 7, line 9, for "Farther" eds. 1 and 2 read "Further." § 9, in the quotation from Wordsworth all eds. previous to this read—

> Ere we, who saw, of change were conscious, pierced
> Through their ethereal texture, had become . . .

The quotation in this ed. has been corrected by Wordsworth's text (which shows also some variations of punctuation.) § 11, line 14, after "observe" 1873 ed. wrongly inserts a comma. § 14, for the reference to "§ 7 of this chapter" 1873 ed. wrongly reads "Sec. I. Chap. II."

Ch. iii. § 22, line 19, before "The moment" eds. 1 and 2 read "I believe." § 26, line 20, eds. 1–4 spell "moonlight" with a capital "M."

Ch. iv. § 7 (marginal note), eds. 1 and 2 added "works of Stanfield." § 8, for

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"dexterous" eds. 1 and 2 read "dextrous." § 14, in the quotation from Scott all eds. previous to this contained the following errors:—line 8, "nor shrub" and "nor power" transposed; line 10 "wearied" for "weary"; line 11 "But" for "For." § 15, in the quotation from Wordsworth all eds. previous to this omitted "and."

Ch. v. § 2, in the table of Turner drawings, "Lowestoft" misprinted "Lowstoffe" in eds. 1–4.

Part ii. sec. iv. ch. ii. § 4, line 1, for "lecturing" eds. 1–4 read "giving a lecture." § 21, line 10, for "; but let us express" eds. 1 and 2 read ". In conclusion let us express"

Ch. iii. § 5, line 6, "Loch" in eds. 1–4; "Lake" was erroneously substituted in ed. 5 and afterwards, although in the marginal note "Loch" was retained. § 5, line 7, before "been admirably engraved" eds. 1–4 insert "luckily." § 15, line 1, before "there is no" eds. 1 and 2 insert "Now."

Ch. iv. § 2, for "in the Academy 1842" eds. 1 and 2 read "last year's Academy." § 13, lines 9, 10, "not one contour" was misprinted "no tone colour" in eds. 5 and 1873.

Part ii. sec. v. ch. i. § 2, line 1, for "to suggest" eds. 1 and 2 read "to reach."

Ch. ii. § 1, line 21, before "fondness" eds. 1 and 2 read "little too great." § 3, for "He has shown" eds. 1–4 read "he is a man of." § 5, for "In the Exhibition of 1842" eds. 1 and 2 read "last year's Exhibition." § 9, for "Academy 1842" eds. 1 and 2 read "last year's Academy." § 11, line 1, for "we wish" eds. 1 and 2 read "we almost wish."

Ch. iii. § 6, last line, eds. 1 and 2 read "Salt Ash" for "Turner's Saltash." § 22, the words "takes the shape" were not italicised in eds. 1–4. § 37, line 33, for "the Earl of Ellesmere" eds. 3 and 4 read "Lord Francis Egerton."

Part ii. sec. vi. ch. i. § 1, line 9, for "With the Italian" eds. 1 and 2 read "Among." § 2, the marginal note in eds. 1 and 2 is opposite the words "It will be best to begin," etc. § 8, last line, for "This is nature" eds. 1 and 2 read "Now this is nature." § 12, line 12, for "The landscape of Poussin" eds. 1–4 read "the windy landscape," and in the next line eds. 1 and 2 spell "Aeneas" "Eneas." § 12, last line, "angle" misprinted "agle" in 1873 ed. § 16 (marginal note), ed. 1873 reads incorrectly "Leafage in . . ." for "Leafage. Its . . ." § 23, line 2, for "Marly" 1873 ed. has "Marley." § 24, line 1, the reference is wrongly given to "Ch. iv." in eds. 1–5 and 1873. § 24, last line, for "Oakhampton" eds. 1 and 2 read (correctly) "Okehampton."

END OF VOLUME III

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